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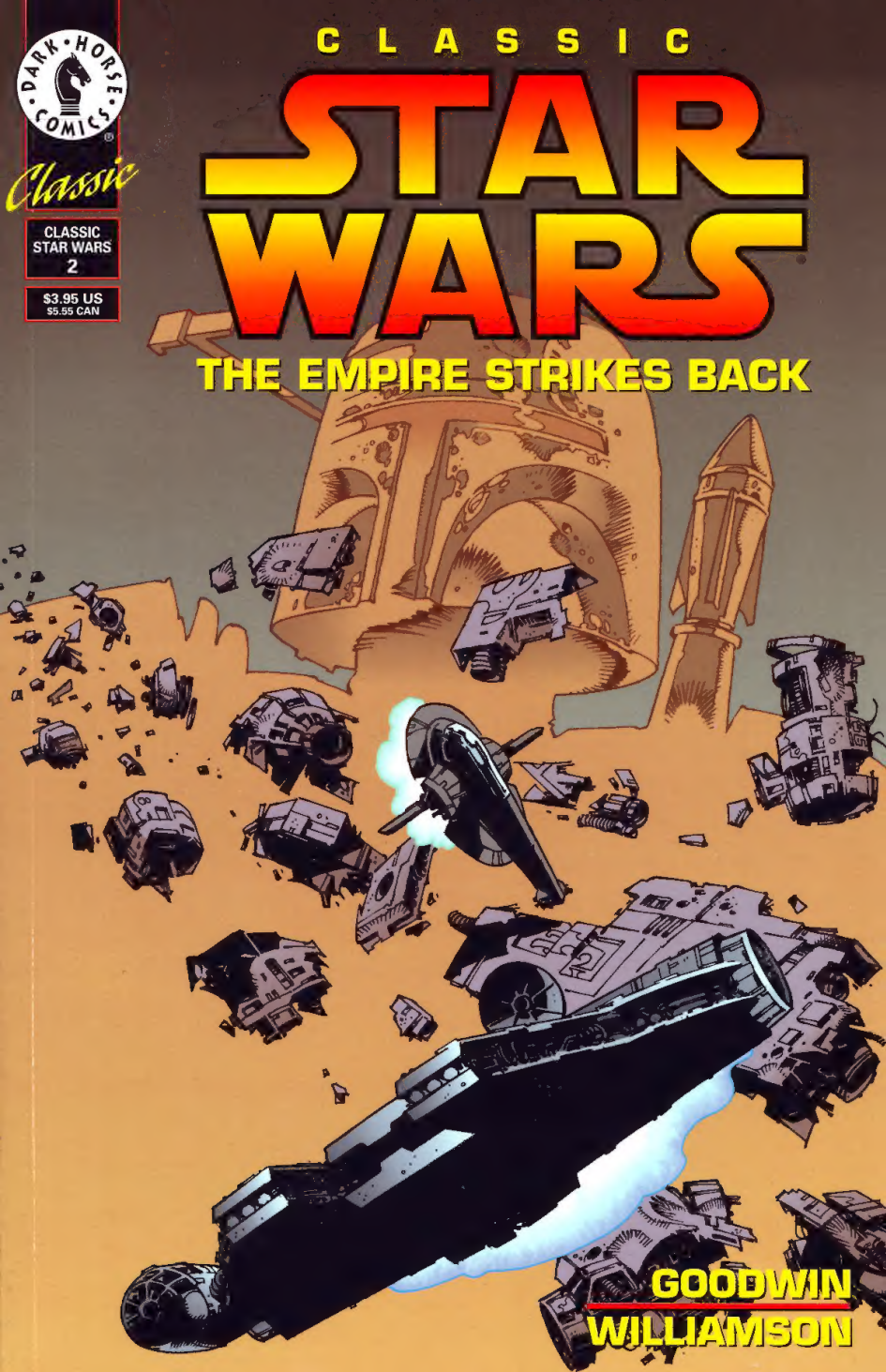
THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK



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CLASSIC

STAR WARS®

THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK ⊛ BOOK TWO

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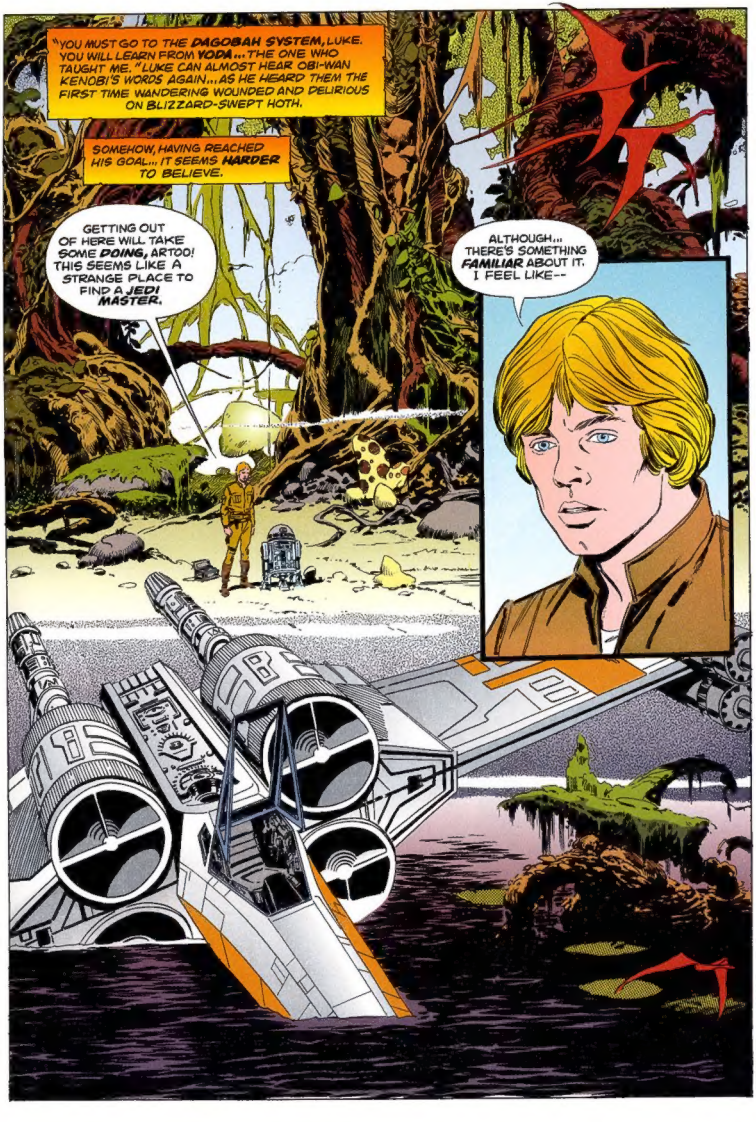
FAILING TO CRUSH THE REBELS BY ATTACKING THEIR BASE ON THE ICE PLANET, HOTH, DARTH VADER'S FLEET HOTLY PURSUES THE MILLENNIUM FALCON. BUT AS THE SHADOW OF THE DARK LORD THREATENS TO ENGULF PRINCESS LEIA AND THE OTHERS ABOARD, LUKE IS UNAWARE... GUIDED BY THE FORCE ON A MISSION OF HIS OWN. NOW, STRANGE NEW DANGERS LOOM!... BOTH FOR HIM AND HIS FRIENDS.


"YOU MUST GO TO THE DAGOBAH SYSTEM, LUKE. YOU WILL LEARN FROM YODA... THE ONE WHO TAUGHT ME." LUKE CAN ALMOST HEAR OBI-WAN KENOBI'S WORDS AGAIN... AS HE HEARD THEM THE FIRST TIME WANDERING WOUNDED AND DELIRIOUS ON BLIZZARD-SWEPT HOTH.
SOMEHOW, HAVING REACHED HIS GOAL... IT SEEMS HARDER TO BELIEVE.
GETTING OUT OF HERE WILL TAKE SOME DOING, ARTOO! THIS SEEMS LIKE A STRANGE PLACE TO FIND A JEDI MASTER.
ALTHOUGH... THERE'S SOMETHING FAMILIAR ABOUT IT. I FEEL LIKE--

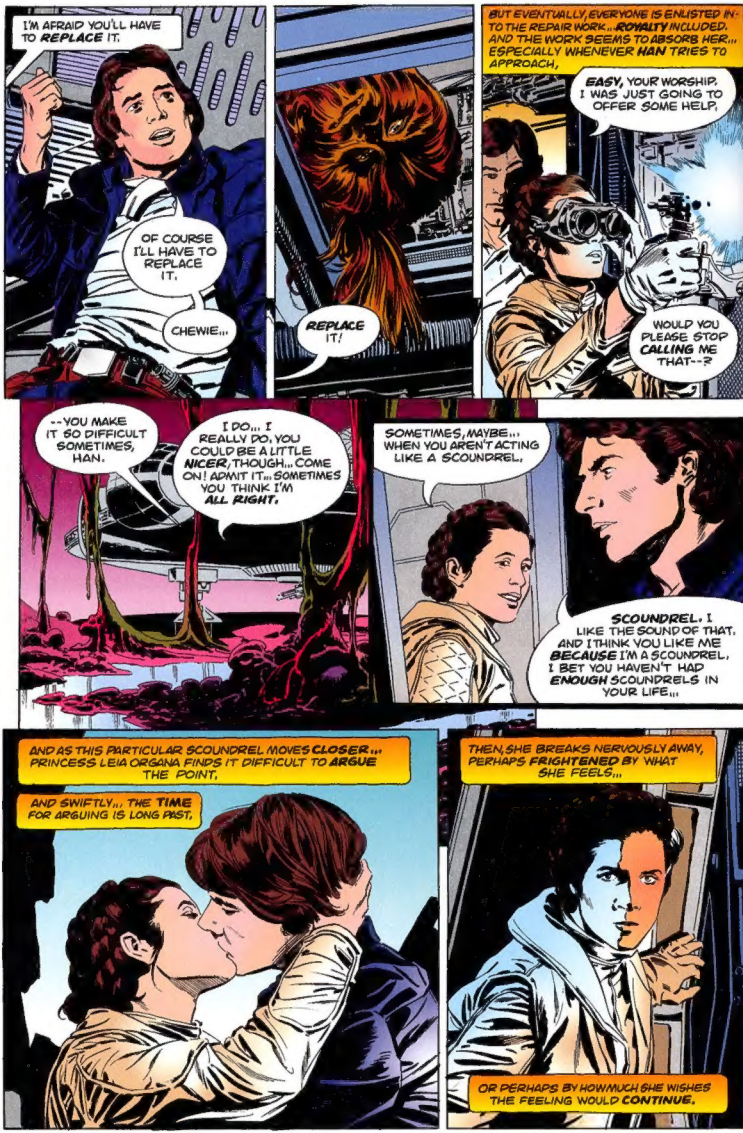
YOU FEEL LIKE WHAT...?
LIKE... WE'RE BEING WATCHED!
WA-REEEET!
AWAY PUT YOUR WEAPON... I MEAN YOU NO HARM. BUT I AM WONDERING... WHY ARE YOU HERE? PERHAPS HELP YOU I CAN.
I... I DON'T THINK SO, YOU SEE, I'M LOOKING FOR A GREAT WARRIOR.
A GREAT WARRIOR...? NOT MANY OF THOSE. WARS DON'T MAKE ONE GREAT.
HEY! THAT FOOD CONCENTRATE STICK WAS GOING TO BE MY DINNER!
THE WIZENED LITTLE INTRUDER SEEMS UNIMPRESSED, PARTICULARLY WHEN HE STARTS TO CHEW AND PROMPTLY SPITS OUT THE BITE TAKEN.
SPEEWH! HOW YOU GET SO BIG EATING FOOD OF THIS KIND? COME, COME! I TAKE YOU TO GOOD FOOD... HELP YOU FIND YOUR FRIEND.
I'M NOT LOOKING FOR A FRIEND. I'M LOOKING FOR A JEDI MASTER.
OH, A JEDI MASTER. DIFFERENT ALTOGETHER, YODA. YOU SEEK YODA. I TAKE YOU TO HIM... COME.
YOU... KNOW HIM?
THE GNOME-LIKE CREATURE MERELY RUMMAGES ON THROUGH THE SUPPLY PACK...
...UNTIL HE COMES UP WITH A POWER LAMP, AND OVER ARTOO'S ELECTRONIC PROTESTS, WALKS OFF WITH IT. LUKE HESITATES A MOMENT... THEN FOLLOWS.
FA-DITTA VOOP?!
SETTLE DOWN, ARTOO... WATCH OVER THE SHIP. I CAN TAKE CARE OF MYSELF... I'LL BE SAFE.
HEH... SAFE, QUITE SAFE... HEH, HEH, YES... OF COURSE.

FAR AWAY FROM THE MISTS OF DAGOBAH WHICH ENVELOP LUKE, TWO IMPERIAL CRUISERS MOVE THROUGH THE ASTEROID FIELD TO WHICH THEY HAVE TRACKED THE MILLENNIUM FALCON...
...BOMBING AS THEY GO!
ONE TARGET: A PARTICULARLY LARGE CRATER ON A PARTICULARLY LARGE ASTEROID.

BUT THEIR CHARGES FALL STRAIGHT INTO THE CRATER'S NEARLY BOTTOMLESS DEPTHS... MISSING A CAVE IN ITS WALL.
OH,MY! THEY'VE FOUND US! ISN'T IT ENOUGH THAT THIS ASTEROID IS ALREADY UNSTABLE?!
RELAX, BRIGHT EYES! THOSE TREMORS WHEN WE LANDED WERE NOTHING. AND THE CRUISERS ARE MOVING AWAY...
THEY'RE JUST TRYING TO STIR SOMETHING UP. WE'RE SAFE.

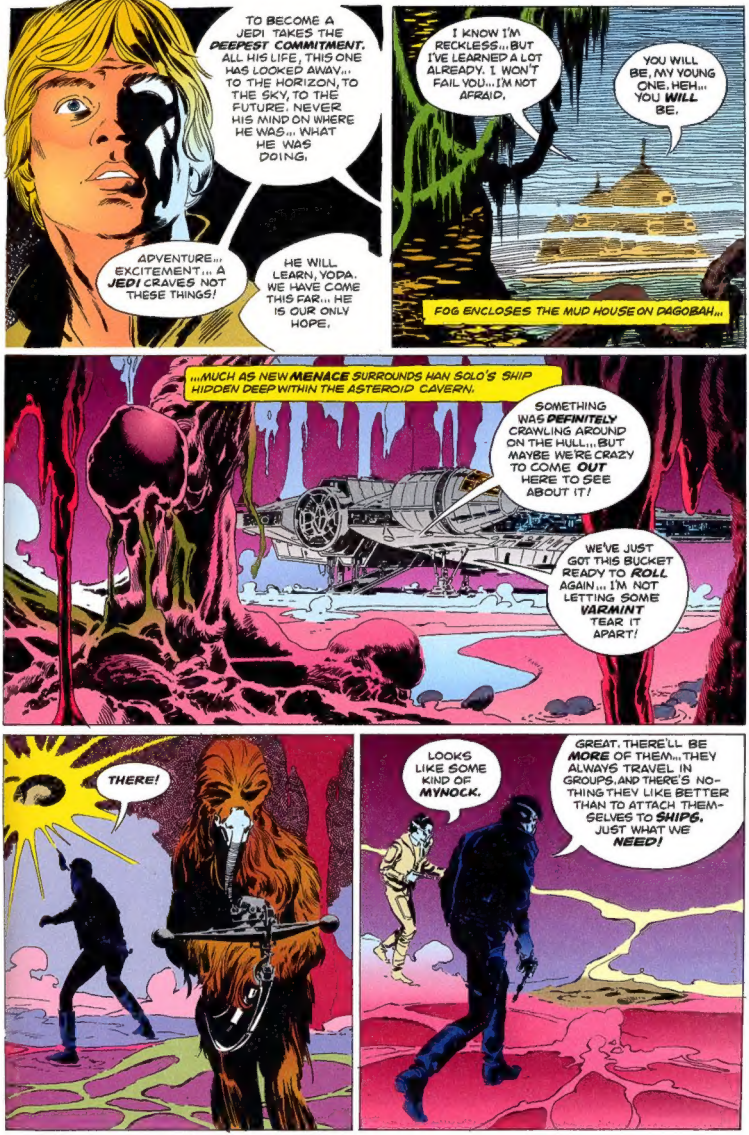
WHERE HAVE I HEARD THAT BEFORE, MR. SOLO?
THANKS FOR THE VOTE OF CONFIDENCE, YOUR WORSHIP.
THREEPIO, HAS THIS FLYING SHORT CIRCUIT TOLD YOU ANYTHING?

WHERE'S ARTOO WHEN I NEED HIM? I DON'T KNOW WHERE YOUR SHIP LEARNED TO COMMUNICATE, CAPTAIN... BUT ITS DIALECT LEAVES SOMETHING TO BE DESIRED.
I BELIEVE, SIR, IT'S SAYING THAT THE POWER COUPLING ON THE NEGATIVE AXIS HAS BEEN POLARIZED.

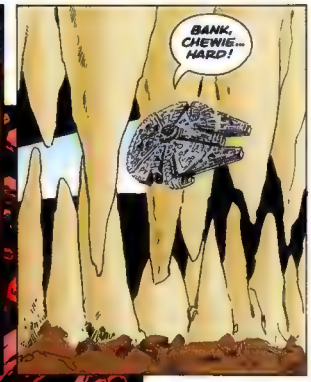

I'M AFRAID YOU'LL HAVE TO REPLACE IT.
OF COURSE I'LL HAVE TO REPLACE IT.
CHEWIE...
REPLACE IT!
BUT EVENTUALLY, EVERYONE IS ENLISTED IN TO THE REPAIR WORK... ROYALTY INCLUDED. AND THE WORK SEEMS TO ABSORB HER... ESPECIALLY WHENEVER HAN TRIES TO APPROACH,
EASY, YOUR WORSHIP. I WAS JUST GOING TO OFFER SOME HELP.
WOULD YOU PLEASE STOP CALLING ME THAT--?
--YOU MAKE IT SO DIFFICULT SOMETIMES, HAN.
I DO... I REALLY DO. YOU COULD BE A LITTLE NICER, THOUGH... COME ON! ADMIT IT... SOMETIMES YOU THINK I'M ALL RIGHT.
SOMETIMES, MAYBE... WHEN YOU AREN'T ACTING LIKE A SCOUNDREL.
SCOUNDREL. I LIKE THE SOUND OF THAT. AND I THINK YOU LIKE ME BECAUSE I'M A SCOUNDREL. I BET YOU HAVEN'T HAD ENOUGH SCOUNDRELS IN YOUR LIFE...
AND AS THIS PARTICULAR SCOUNDREL MOVES CLOSER... PRINCESS LEIA ORGANA FINDS IT DIFFICULT TO ARGUE THE POINT,
AND SWIFTLY... THE TIME FOR ARGUING IS LONG PAST.
THEN, SHE BREAKS NERVOUSLY AWAY, PERHAPS FRIGHTENED BY WHAT SHE FEELS...
OR PERHAPS BY HOWMUCH SHE WISHES THE FEELING WOULD CONTINUE.

MEANWHILE, BEYOND THE MILLENNIUM FALCON'S REFUGE, DARTH VADER RESOLUTELY REFUSES TO ABANDON THE HUNT ...DESPITE THE TOLL TAKEN ON HIS FLEET BY THE ASTEROID FIELD!
MY LORD...! I-IT'S THE EMPEROR! HE COMMANDS YOU TO MAKE CONTACT WITH HIM.
MOVE OUT TO A POSITION WHERE WE CAN SEND A CLEAR TRANSMISSION--
--AND CODE THE SIGNAL TO MY PRIVATE CHAMBER.
AND SHORTLY, WITHIN THAT CHAMBER...
WHAT IS THY BIDDING, MY MASTER?
THERE IS A GRAVE DISTURBANCE IN THE FORCE! WE HAVE A NEW ENEMY WHO COULD BRING ABOUT OUR DESTRUCTION--
--THE SON OF SKYWALKER! YOU MUST DESTROY HIM, MY SERVANT... OR HE WILL BE OUR UNDOING.
HE'S NOT A JEDI... JUST A BOY. OBI-WAN COULD NOT HAVE TAUGHT HIM VERY MUCH.
YET WITH THE FORCE SO STRONG WITHIN HIM... HE COULD BE A POWERFUL ALLY. IF HE COULD BE TURNED...
FOR A LONG MOMENT THE HUGE HOLOGRAPH IMAGE FLICKERS SILENTLY. THEN...
YES... YES. HE WOULD BE A GREAT ASSET. CAN IT BE DONE?
HE WILL JOIN US, MY MASTER--
--OR DIE!

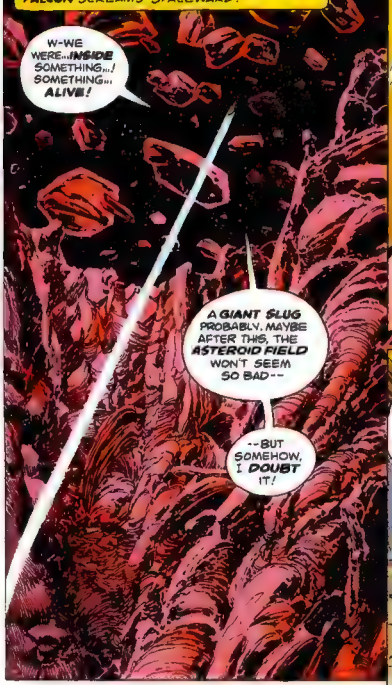
ON MIST-SHROUDED DAGOBAH, THE OBJECT OF THE EMPEROR'S CONCERN AND INTEREST CONTINUES HIS OWN SEARCH, A SEARCH THAT NOW BRINGS HIM TO A CLEARING IN THE GNARLED SWAMP TREES... AND A SMALL HOUSE OF MUD.
...LOOK, I'M SURE YOUR FOOD'S DELICIOUS, BUT CAN'T WE GO ON TO YODA FIRST? HOW FAR AWAY IS HE?
NOT FAR, NOT FAR, PATIENCE. IT IS THE JEDI'S TIME TO EAT, TOO, SOON YOU WILL SEE HIM.
BUT WHY WISH YOU TO BECOME A JEDI?
BECAUSE OF MY FATHER, I GUESS.
OH, YOUR FATHER... A POWERFUL JEDI WAS HE, POWERFUL JEDI.
HOW COULD YOU KNOW MY FATHER? YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW WHO I AM. AND I... I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT I'M DOING HERE!
NO GOOD THIS! THIS WILL NOT DO. I CANNOT TEACH HIM. THE BOY HAS NO PATIENCE!
A CHILL GOES THROUGH LUKE SKYWALKER AS HIS WIZENED LITTLE GUIDE SPEAKS SEEMINGLY TO HIMSELF... AND IS ANSWERED BY THE VOICE OF BEN KENOBI!
HE WILL LEARN PATIENCE. WE'VE DISCUSSED THIS BEFORE.
SO MUCH ANGER IN HIM. ...JUST LIKE HIS FATHER.
Y-YOU'RE... YODA! WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME? I'M READY... I CAN BE A JEDI! RIGHT, BEN...? BEN...?
READY ARE YOU? WHAT KNOW YOU OF READY? I HAVE TRAINED JEDI FOR 800 YEARS... MY OWN COUNSEL I'LL KEEP ON WHO IS TO BE TRAINED.


TO BECOME A JEDI TAKES THE DEEPEST COMMITMENT, ALL HIS LIFE, THIS ONE HAS LOOKED AWAY... TO THE HORIZON, TO THE SKY, TO THE FUTURE. NEVER HIS MIND ON WHERE HE WAS... WHAT HE WAS DOING.
ADVENTURE... EXCITEMENT... A JEDI CRAVES NOT THESE THINGS!
HE WILL LEARN, YODA. WE HAVE COME THIS FAR... HE IS OUR ONLY HOPE.
I KNOW I'M RECKLESS... BUT I'VE LEARNED A LOT ALREADY. I WON'T FAIL YOU... I'M NOT AFRAID.
YOU WILL BE, MY YOUNG ONE. HEH... YOU WILL BE.
FOG ENCLOSES THE MUD HOUSE ON DAGOBAH...
...MUCH AS NEW MENACE SURROUNDS HAN SOLO'S SHIP HIDDEN DEEP WITHIN THE ASTEROID CAVERN.
SOMETHING WAS DEFINITELY CRAWLING AROUND ON THE HULL... BUT MAYBE WE'RE CRAZY TO COME OUT HERE TO SEE ABOUT IT!
WE'VE JUST GOT THIS BUCKET READY TO ROLL AGAIN... I'M NOT LETTING SOME VARMINT TEAR IT APART!
THERE!
LOOKS LIKE SOME KIND OF MYNOCK.
GREAT. THERE'LL BE MORE OF THEM... THEY ALWAYS TRAVEL IN GROUPS, AND THERE'S NOTHING THEY LIKE BETTER THAN TO ATTACH THEMSELVES TO SHIPS, JUST WHAT WE NEED!

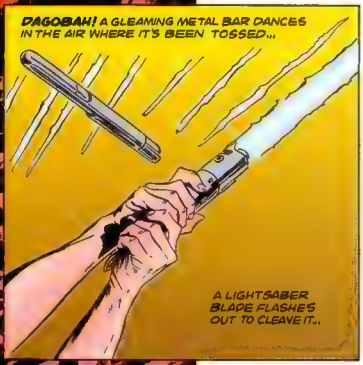
THIS ASTEROID HAS THE STRANGEST CONSISTENCY. LOOK AT THE GROUND ... IT'S NOT LIKE ROCK AT ALL.
YEAH, SPONGY. THERE'S AN AWFUL LOT OF MOISTURE IN HERE. I WONDER...
AND SUDDENLY, THE CORELLIAN PILOT FIRES OFF INTO THE DARKNESS...
HAN, WHAT ARE YOU DOING? YOU'VE STARTED ANOTHER TREMOR ...LIKE WHEN WE LANDED!
JUST WHAT I WAS AFRAID OF... EVERYBODY INSIDE... FAST!
BUT THERE IS NO SAFETY IN THE SHAKING, SHIFTING CRAFT'S INTERIOR!
THE MAKER PRESERVE US...! THIS IS WORSE THAN THE FIRST TIME!
FIRE 'ER UP, CHEWIE ... WE'RE GETTING OUT OF HERE!
YOU CAN'T MAKE THE JUMP TO LIGHT-SPEED IN THIS ASTEROID FIELD, HAN. IF THE IMPERIALS ARE STILL WAITING...
NO TIME TO DISCUSS THIS IN COMMITTEE! STRAP YOURSELF IN, SWEETHEART... WE'RE TAKING OFF!
WITH A ROAR, THE MILLENNIUM FALCON SURGES FORWARD! BUT...
THE MOUTH OF THE CAVE...! IT'S COLLAPSING... CLOSING...!
MOUTH IS RIGHT, YOUR ROYALNESS--



AND FROM THE JAWS OF DEATH...THE **MILLENNIUM FALCON** SCREAMS SPACEWARD!

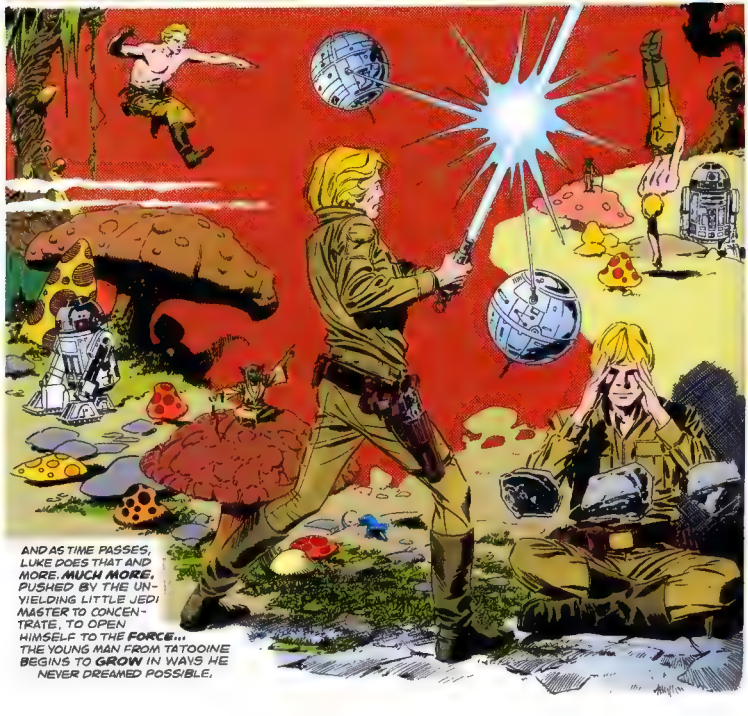

W-WE WERE...INSIDE SOMETHING...! SOMETHING... ALIVE!
A GIANT SLUG PROBABLY. MAYBE AFTER THIS, THE ASTEROID FIELD WON'T SEEM SO BAD--
--BUT SOMEHOW, I DOUBT IT!

DAGOBAH! A GLEAMING METAL BAR DANCES IN THE AIR WHERE IT'S BEEN TOSSED...

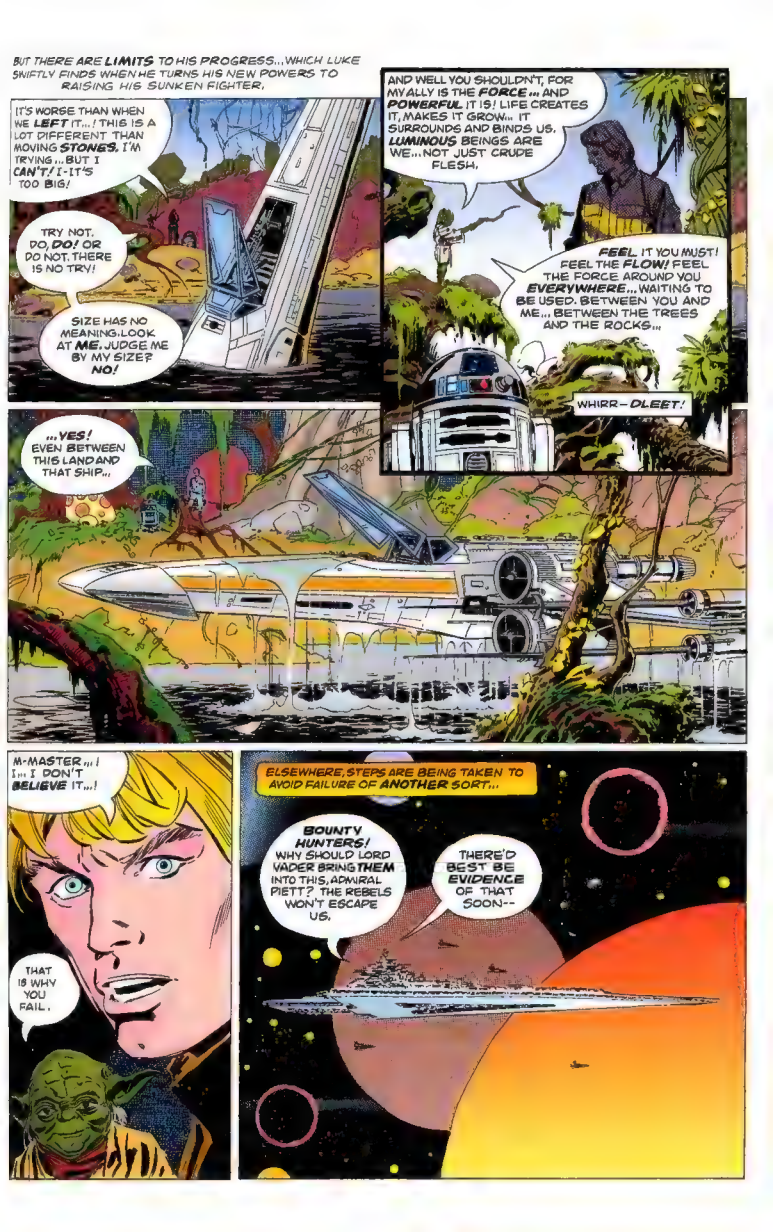


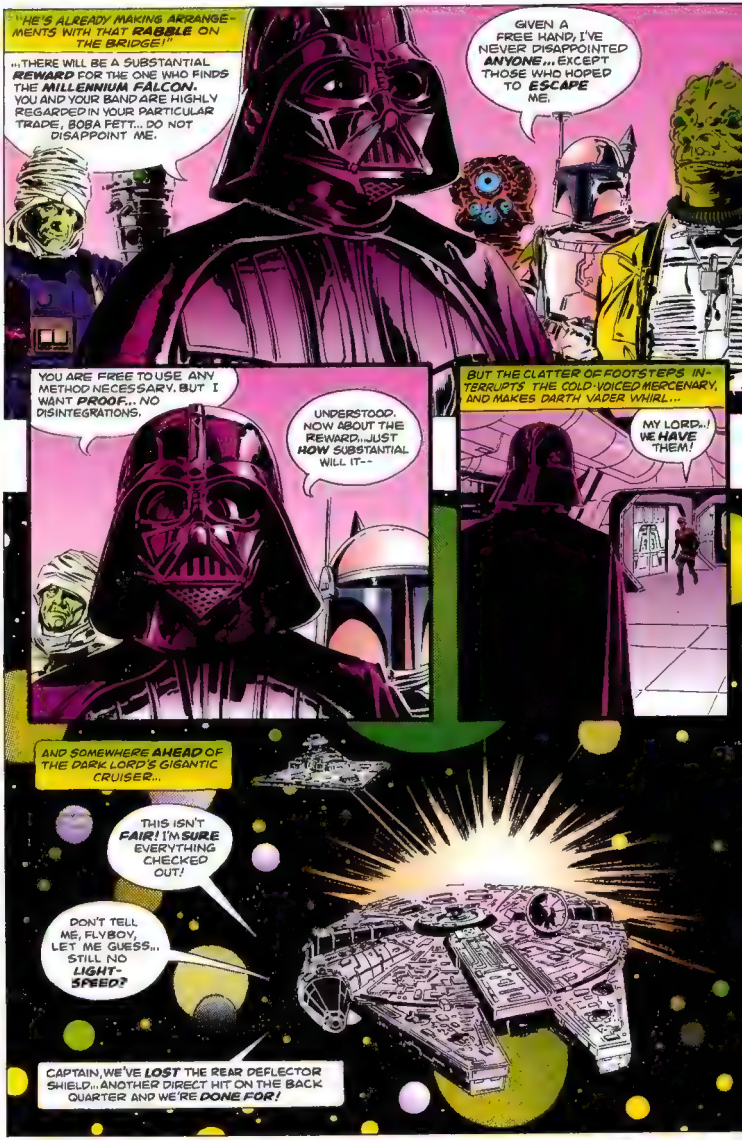
...AND **MISSES** AS ITS WIELDER **FALLS!**

I...CAN'T.../ NOT AFTER...RUNNING THROUGH MILES OF SWAMP...WITH YOU ON MY BACK... TOO...TIRED...!
THE BAR WOULD BE IN SEVEN PIECES... WERE YOU A JEDI.

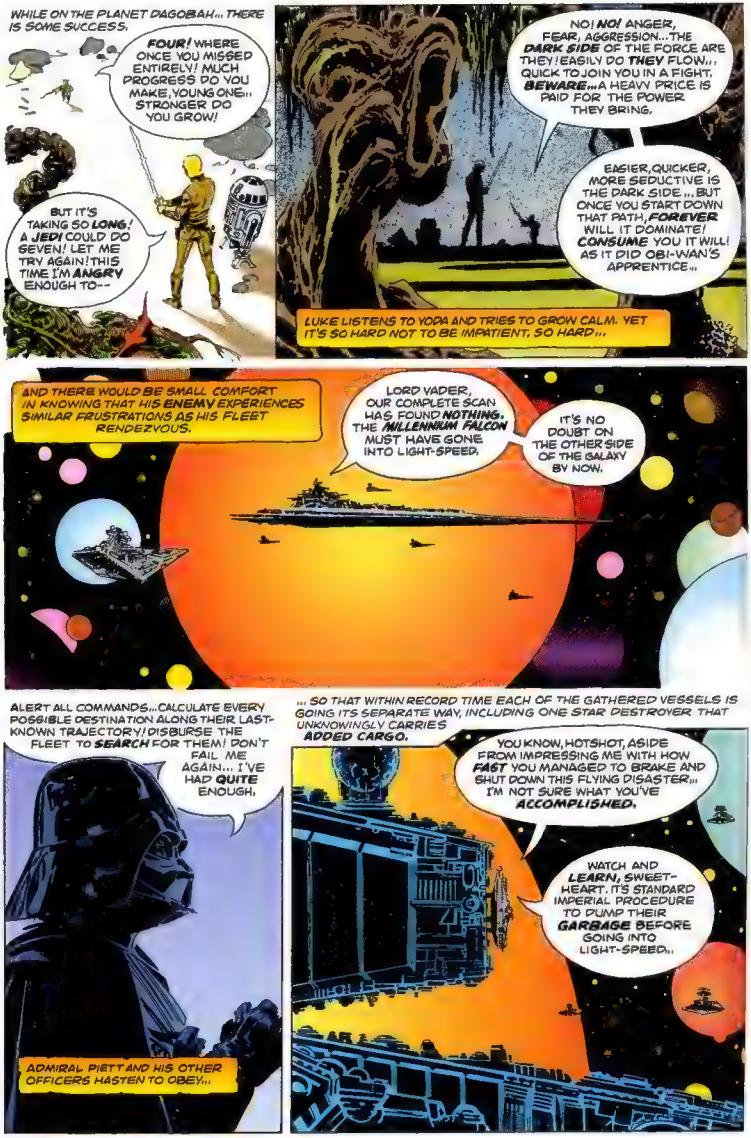


AND AS TIME PASSES, LUKE DOES THAT AND MORE. MUCH MORE. PUSHED BY THE UNYIELDING LITTLE JEDI MASTER TO CONCENTRATE, TO OPEN HIMSELF TO THE FORCE... THE YOUNG MAN FROM TATOOINE BEGINS TO GROW IN WAYS HE NEVER DREAMED POSSIBLE.


BUT THERE ARE LIMITS TO HIS PROGRESS...WHICH LUKE SWIFTLY FINDS WHEN HE TURNS HIS NEW POWERS TO RAISING HIS SUNKEN FIGHTER.
IT'S WORSE THAN WHEN WE LEFT IT...! THIS IS A LOT DIFFERENT THAN MOVING STONES. I'M TRYING...BUT I CAN'T! I-IT'S TOO BIG!
TRY NOT. DO, DO! OR DO NOT. THERE IS NO TRY!
SIZE HAS NO MEANING. LOOK AT ME. JUDGE ME BY MY SIZE? NO!
AND WELL YOU SHOULDN'T, FOR MY ALLY IS THE FORCE... AND POWERFUL IT IS! LIFE CREATES IT, MAKES IT GROW... IT SURROUNDS AND BINDS US. LUMINOUS BEINGS ARE WE... NOT JUST CRUDE FLESH.
FEEL IT YOU MUST! FEEL THE FLOW! FEEL THE FORCE AROUND YOU EVERYWHERE... WAITING TO BE USED. BETWEEN YOU AND ME... BETWEEN THE TREES AND THE ROCKS...
WHIRR—DLEET!
...YES! EVEN BETWEEN THIS LAND AND THAT SHIP...
M-MASTER...! I... I DON'T BELIEVE IT...!
THAT IS WHY YOU FAIL.
ELSEWHERE, STEPS ARE BEING TAKEN TO AVOID FAILURE OF ANOTHER SORT...
BOUNTY HUNTERS! WHY SHOULD LORD VADER BRING THEM INTO THIS, ADMIRAL PIETT? THE REBELS WON'T ESCAPE US.
THERE'D BEST BE EVIDENCE OF THAT SOON--


"HE'S ALREADY MAKING ARRANGEMENTS WITH THAT RABBLE ON THE BRIDGE!"
...THERE WILL BE A SUBSTANTIAL REWARD FOR THE ONE WHO FINDS THE MILLENNIUM FALCON. YOU AND YOUR BAND ARE HIGHLY REGARDED IN YOUR PARTICULAR TRADE, BOBA FETT... DO NOT DISAPPOINT ME.
GIVEN A FREE HAND, I'VE NEVER DISAPPOINTED ANYONE... EXCEPT THOSE WHO HOPED TO ESCAPE ME.
YOU ARE FREE TO USE ANY METHOD NECESSARY. BUT I WANT PROOF... NO DISINTEGRATIONS.
UNDERSTOOD. NOW ABOUT THE REWARD...JUST HOW SUBSTANTIAL WILL IT--
BUT THE CLATTER OF FOOTSTEPS INTERRUPTS THE COLD-VOICED MERCENARY, AND MAKES DARTH VADER WHIRL...
MY LORD..! WE HAVE THEM!
AND SOMEWHERE AHEAD OF THE DARK LORD'S GIGANTIC CRUISER...
THIS ISN'T FAIR! I'M SURE EVERYTHING CHECKED OUT!
DON'T TELL ME, FLYBOY, LET ME GUESS... STILL NO LIGHT-SPEED?
CAPTAIN, WE'VE LOST THE REAR DEFLECTOR SHIELD...ANOTHER DIRECT HIT ON THE BACK QUARTER AND WE'RE DONE FOR!

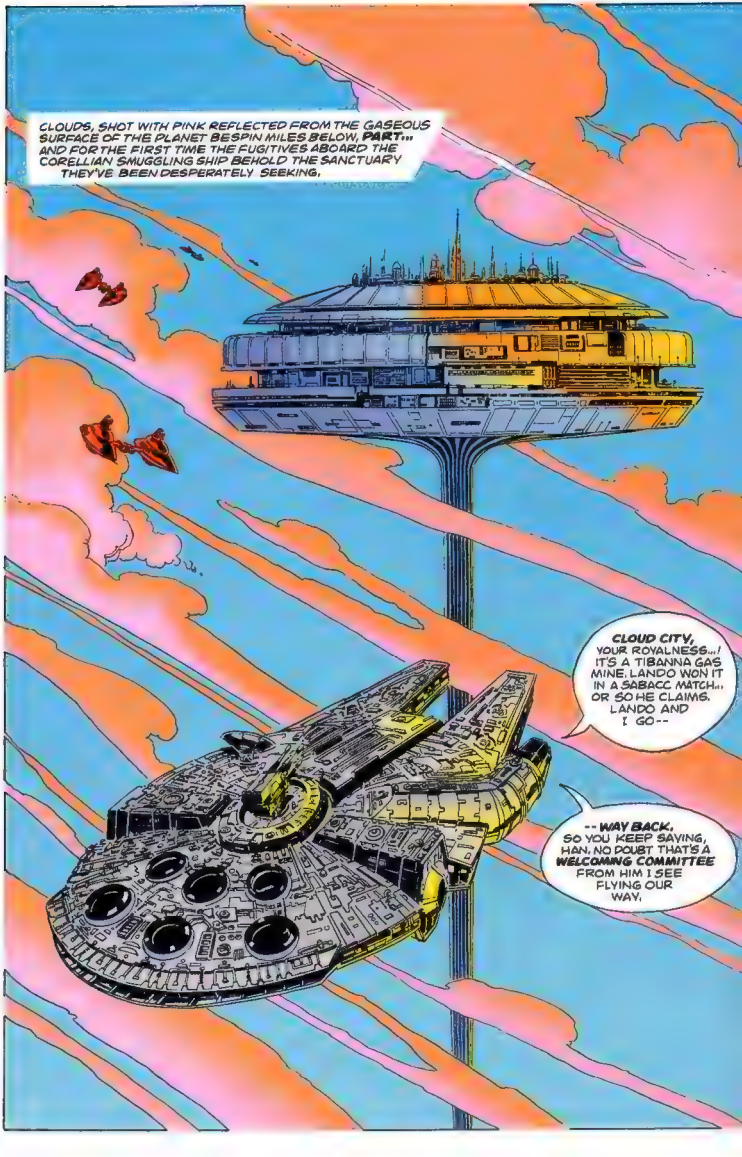
FOR AN INSTANT THE CORELLIAN PILOT IS SILENT, THOUGHTFUL. THEN...
ALL RIGHT, CHEWIE! SWING THIS BUCKET AROUND ... FULL POWER ON THE FRONT SHIELD!
YOU'RE NOT GOING TO ATTACK THEM?!
SIR, IF I MIGHT POINT OUT, THE ODDS OF SURVIVING A DIRECT ASSAULT ON AN IMPERIAL STAR DESTROYER ARE--
A CURT GROWL FROM THE SHIP'S WOOKIEE FIRST MATE INDUCES SEE-THREEPIO TO KEEP HIS ODDS TO HIMSELF...
...AS THE TINY FREIGHTER SCREAMS LOW ACROSS THE IMPERIAL WARSHIP'S HULL WITH SEEMINGLY SUICIDAL INTENT!
WE'RE GOING TO COLLIDE!
SHIELDS UP.. HE'S INSANE!
LOOK OUT!
THEN SUDDENLY...
CAPTAIN...! IT'S GONE! DOESN'T APPEAR ON ANY OF OUR TRACKING SCOPES. PERHAPS THEY WENT INTO LIGHT-SPEED AT THE LAST INSTANT...
THEN WHY DID THEY ATTACK? THEY COULD HAVE GONE INTO HYPERSPACE AS SOON AS THEY CLEARED THE ASTEROID FIELD! THERE'S GOT TO BE A MORE LOGICAL EXPLANATION, BUT--
SIR, LORD VADER DEMANDS AN UPDATE ON OUR PURSUIT, SIR...? SIR...?
WITH THE RESIGNED AIR OF A MAN TOTALLY WITHOUT HOPE... THE CRUISER COMMANDER MOVES TO REPORT HIS FAILURE.


WHILE ON THE PLANET DAGOBAH... THERE IS SOME SUCCESS.
FOUR! WHERE ONCE YOU MISSED ENTIRELY! MUCH PROGRESS DO YOU MAKE, YOUNG ONE... STRONGER DO YOU GROW!
BUT IT'S TAKING SO LONG! A JEDI COULD DO SEVEN! LET ME TRY AGAIN! THIS TIME I'M ANGRY ENOUGH TO--
NO! NO! ANGER, FEAR, AGGRESSION... THE DARK SIDE OF THE FORCE ARE THEY! EASILY DO THEY FLOW... QUICK TO JOIN YOU IN A FIGHT. BEWARE... A HEAVY PRICE IS PAID FOR THE POWER THEY BRING.
EASIER, QUICKER, MORE SEDUCTIVE IS THE DARK SIDE... BUT ONCE YOU START DOWN THAT PATH, FOREVER WILL IT DOMINATE! CONSUME YOU IT WILL! AS IT DID OBI-WAN'S APPRENTICE...
LUKE LISTENS TO YODA AND TRIES TO GROW CALM. YET IT'S SO HARD NOT TO BE IMPATIENT; SO HARD...
AND THERE WOULD BE SMALL COMFORT IN KNOWING THAT HIS ENEMY EXPERIENCES SIMILAR FRUSTRATIONS AS HIS FLEET RENDEZVOUS.
LORD VADER, OUR COMPLETE SCAN HAS FOUND NOTHING. THE MILLENNIUM FALCON MUST HAVE GONE INTO LIGHT-SPEED.
IT'S NO DOUBT ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE GALAXY BY NOW.
ALERT ALL COMMANDS... CALCULATE EVERY POSSIBLE DESTINATION ALONG THEIR LAST-KNOWN TRAJECTORY! DISBURSE THE FLEET TO SEARCH FOR THEM! DON'T FAIL ME AGAIN... I'VE HAD QUITE ENOUGH.
ADMIRAL PIETT AND HIS OTHER OFFICERS HASTEN TO OBEY...
... SO THAT WITHIN RECORD TIME EACH OF THE GATHERED VESSELS IS GOING ITS SEPARATE WAY, INCLUDING ONE STAR DESTROYER THAT UNKNOWINGLY CARRIES ADDED CARGO.
YOU KNOW, HOTSHOT, ASIDE FROM IMPRESSING ME WITH HOW FAST YOU MANAGED TO BRAKE AND SHUT DOWN THIS FLYING DISASTER... I'M NOT SURE WHAT YOU'VE ACCOMPLISHED.
WATCH AND LEARN, SWEETHEART. IT'S STANDARD IMPERIAL PROCEDURE TO DUMP THEIR GARBAGE BEFORE GOING INTO LIGHT-SPEED...

ALMOST ON CUE, DEBRIS BEGINS TO POUR FROM ONE OF THE HUGE SHIP'S HATCHES
HIT THE MANUAL RELEASE ON THE LANDING CLAWS, CHEWIE!

AND WHEN THE STREAM OF SPENT GENERATORS, UNSALVAGEABLE PARTS, AND OTHER ACCUMULATED JUNK IS JETTISONED... THE MILLENNIUM FALCON ARTFULLY DRIFTS AWAY WITH IT!
NOT BAD, FLYBOY! YOU DO HAVE YOUR MOMENTS... NOT MANY, BUT YOU DO HAVE THEM.
NOW WHAT?
LEMME CHECK THE COMPUTER LOG... AHA! THE BESPIN SYSTEM. IT'S A FAIR DISTANCE... BUT MANAGEABLE. I KNOW A FELLA THERE...
LANDO CALRISSIAN. GAMBLER, CON ARTIST, ALL-AROUND SCOUNDREL... YOUR KIND OF GUY, PRINCESS.
CAN YOU TRUST HIM, HAN?
OF COURSE NOT. BUT LANDO AND I GO WAY BACK... BELIEVE ME, HE HAS NO LOVE FOR THE EMPIRE.
YET AS THE MILLENNIUM FALCON MOVES TOWARD SAFETY, THE SAME FLOATING DEBRIS WHICH MASKS IT FROM THE DEPARTING IMPERIALS HIDES A SECOND SHIP FROM VIEW, A SHIP WHICH FOLLOWS THE FALCON.
IT IS CALLED THE SLAVE 1. IT IS OWNED BY THE BOUNTY HUNTER NAMED BOBA FETT.

ON THE PLANET DAGOBAH, LUKE SKYWALKER IS IN TRAINING TO BECOME A JEDI UNDER THE INSTRUCTION OF THE CENTURIES-OLD MASTER, YODA. BUT EVEN AS THE YOUNG WARRIOR FROM TATOOINE'S POWER AND ABILITY GROW DAILY... DARTH VADER, NOW ENLISTING THE SKILLS OF THE BOUNTY HUNTER, BOBA FETT, CONTINUES TO HOUND LUKE'S FRIENDS IN THE MILLENNIUM FALCON...


CLOUDS, SHOT WITH PINK REFLECTED FROM THE GASEOUS SURFACE OF THE PLANET BESPIN MILES BELOW, PART... AND FOR THE FIRST TIME THE FUGITIVES ABOARD THE CORELLIAN SMUGGLING SHIP BEHOLD THE SANCTUARY THEY'VE BEEN DESPERATELY SEEKING.
CLOUD CITY, YOUR ROYALNESS...! IT'S A TIBANNA GAS MINE. LANDO WON IT IN A SABACC MATCH... OR SO HE CLAIMS. LANDO AND I GO--
-- WAY BACK. SO YOU KEEP SAYING, HAN. NO DOUBT THAT'S A WELCOMING COMMITTEE FROM HIM I SEE FLYING OUR WAY.

THAT IS A WARNING SHOT...! YOU DO NOT HAVE A LANDING PERMIT. PROCEED TO PLATFORM 327. ANY DEVIATION WILL RESULT IN YOUR DESTRUCTION!
OH,DEAR! RATHER TOUCHY, AREN'T THEY, CAPTAIN SOLO?
I THOUGHT YOU KNEW THESE PEOPLE...
WELL... IT'S BEEN A WHILE.
THE MILLENNIUM FALCON'S WOOKIEE FIRST MATE GIVES HIS PARTNER A LONG UNEASY GROWL...
...AS THE BATTERED FREIGHTER DESCENDS TO ITS BERTH.
THAT WAS A LONG TIME AGO CHEWIE. I'M SURE LANDO'S FORGOTTEN ALL ABOUT IT--
--AND SO SHOULD YOU!
I DON'T LIKE THIS...
IT'LL BE ALL RIGHT. TRUST ME. BUT... KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN, UH... JUST IN CASE.
LANDO! LANDO CALRISSIAN! DON'T TELL ME YOU DON'T RECOGNIZE ME--

HAN SOLO! YOU SLIMY, DOUBLE-CROSSING, NO-GOOD SWINDLER--
I CAN EXPLAIN EVERYTHING, BUDDY. NO NEED FOR HARD FEELINGS ABOUT THE PAST. I ALWAYS SAID YOU WERE A GENTLEMAN--
I'LL BET!

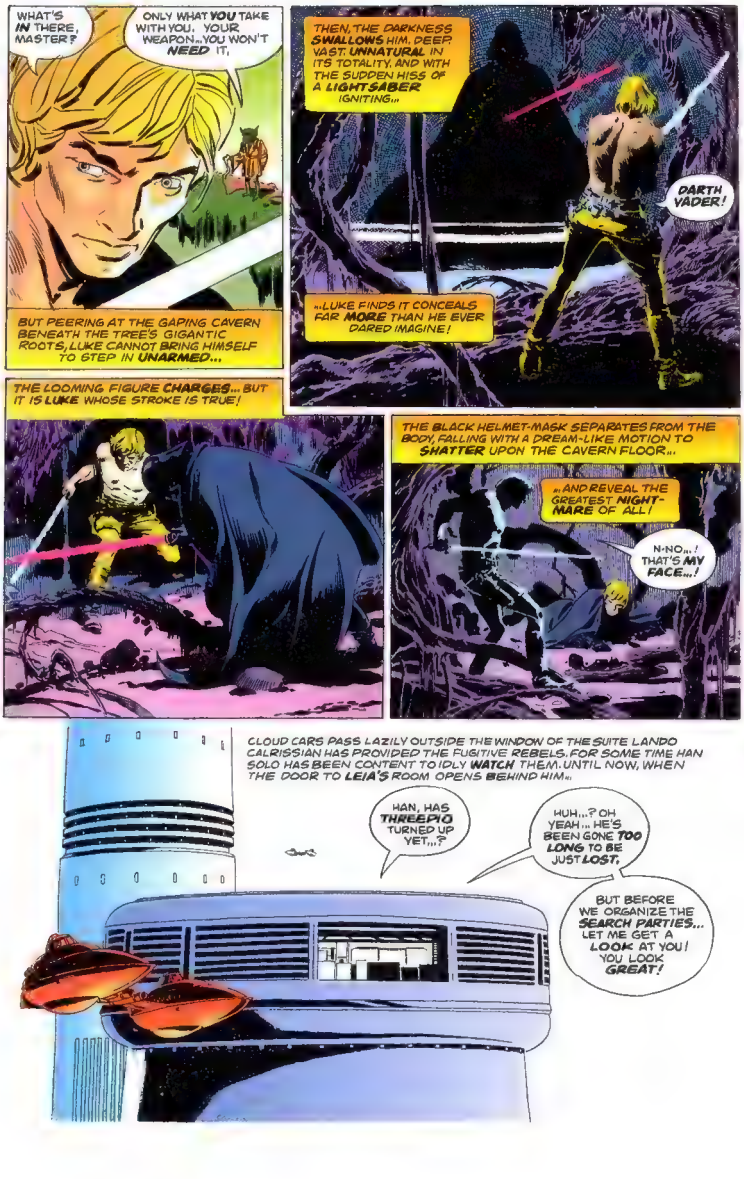
SUDDENLY, LANDO CAN HOLD HIS SCOWL NO LONGER. LAUGHTER FILLS THE MORNING AIR...AND BLASTERS ARE SWIFTLY LOWERED.
YOU SONUVAGUN! YOU REALLY HAD ME GOIN' FOR A SECOND!
THAT STILL LEAVES YOU A COUPLE OF BLUFFS AHEAD, ACE! COME ON... INTRODUCE ME TO YOUR FRIENDS.

CHEWBACCA, HE ALREADY KNOWS. AND OF THE OTHER TWO TRAVELERS, THE MINING FACILITY'S ADMINISTRATOR IS MOST OBVIOUSLY CHARMED BY PRINCESS LEIA ORGANA.
THE LADY'S WITH ME, LANDO... AND I DON'T INTEND TO GAMBLE HER AWAY. SO YOU MIGHT JUST AS WELL FORGET SHE EXISTS...
WE'RE ONLY GONNA BE HERE LONG ENOUGH TO MAKE REPAIRS.
REPAIRS? WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO MY SHIP?

LANDO USED TO OWN THE FALCON. HE SOMETIMES FORGETS THAT HE LOST HER FAIR AND SQUARE.
THAT SHIP SAVED MY LIFE MORE THAN A FEW TIMES. IT'S THE FASTEST HUNK OF JUNK IN THE GALAXY! WHAT'S WRONG WITH HER?

HYPERDRIVE.
I'LL HAVE MY PEOPLE GET TO WORK RIGHT AWAY. HATE THE THOUGHT OF THE MILLENNIUM FALCON WITHOUT HER HEART!

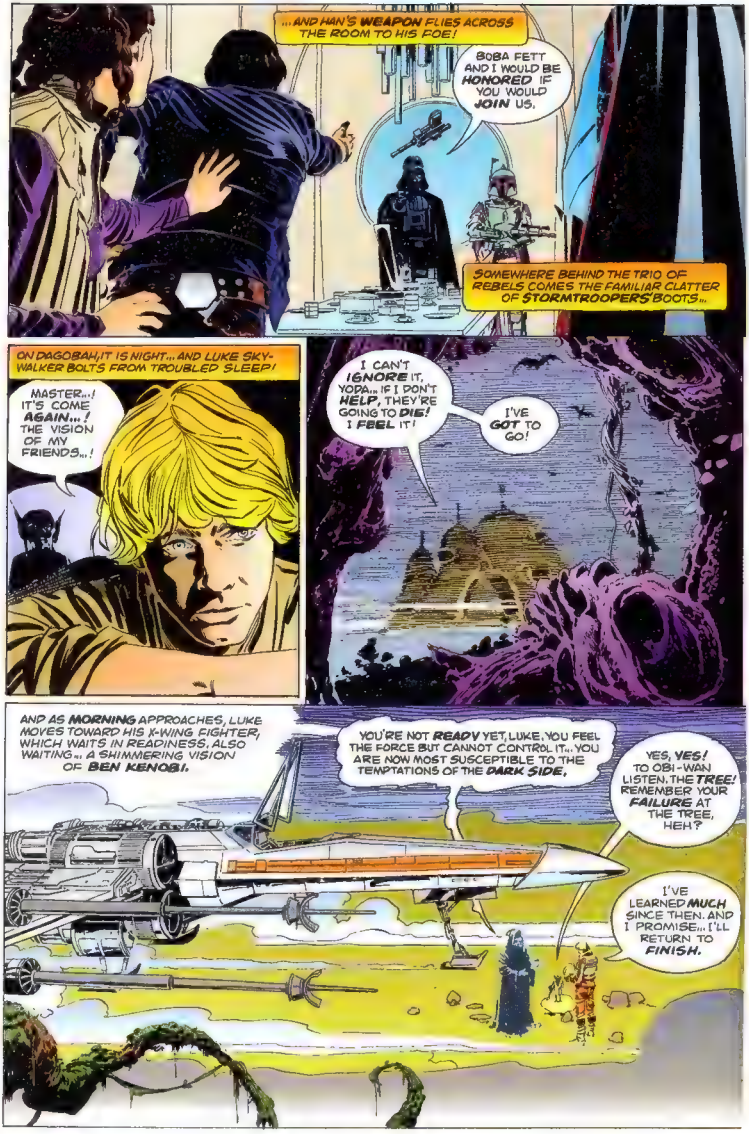
THINGS LOOK PROSPEROUS, LANDO. HOW'S YOUR MINING OPERATION DOING?
NOT AS WELL AS I'D LIKE. WE'RE A SMALL OUTPOST AND NOT VERY SELF-SUFFICIENT. I'VE HAD SUPPLY PROBLEMS THAT...
HEY! WHAT ARE YOU GRINNING AT, SOLO?
NOTHING. EXCEPT I NEVER WOULD'VE GUESSED THAT UNDER THAT WILD SCHEMER I USED TO KNOW WAS A RESPONSIBLE LEADER AND BUSINESSMAN...! YOU WEAR IT WELL.
SEEING YOU AGAIN SURE BRINGS BACK THINGS... YEAH, I AM RESPONSIBLE THESE DAYS. AND YOU KNOW WHAT...?
YOU WERE RIGHT ALL ALONG, HAN... IT'S OVER-RATED!
BUT AS THE LAUGHING GROUP MOVES ALONG--NO ONE NOTICES THAT SEE-THREEPIO HAS NOT KEPT UP WITH THEM.
THAT BLEEPING... IT'S AN R2 UNIT! I'D ALMOST FORGOTTEN WHAT THEY SOUND LIKE.
SEEMS TO BE FROM THAT DOOR AHEAD...
THE BRONZE TRANSLATOR DROID IS WRONG... WHAT WAITS BEYOND THE DOOR IS DEFINITELY NOT AN R2 UNIT!
OH, MY! THOSE LOOK LIKE--
THE SENTENCE IS CUT SHORT BY THE UGLY WHINE OF LASER BOLTS!
DAGOBAH! A TREE LOOMS BEFORE LUKE SKYWALKER, DARK, GNARLED, OMINOUS, MORE SO THAN ANY OTHER HE HAS SEEN ON THIS STRANGE, SWAMP-LIKE PLANET WHERE HE IS BEING TUTORED IN THE WAYS OF THE FORCE.
SOMETHING'S NOT RIGHT, YODA. I FEEL DANGER ...DEATH... COLD...
THIS TREE IS STRONG WITH THE DARK SIDE OF THE FORCE... A SERVANT OF EVIL IT IS. INTO IT YOU MUST GO.


WHAT'S IN THERE, MASTER?
ONLY WHAT YOU TAKE WITH YOU. YOUR WEAPON...YOU WON'T NEED IT.
BUT PEERING AT THE GAPING CAVERN BENEATH THE TREE'S GIGANTIC ROOTS, LUKE CANNOT BRING HIMSELF TO STEP IN UNARMED...
THEN, THE DARKNESS SWALLOWS HIM. DEEP, VAST. UNNATURAL IN ITS TOTALITY, AND WITH THE SUDDEN HISS OF A LIGHTSABER IGNITING...
DARTH VADER!
...LUKE FINDS IT CONCEALS FAR MORE THAN HE EVER DARED IMAGINE!
THE LOOMING FIGURE CHARGES... BUT IT IS LUKE WHOSE STROKE IS TRUE!
THE BLACK HELMET-MASK SEPARATES FROM THE BODY, FALLING WITH A DREAM-LIKE MOTION TO SHATTER UPON THE CAVERN FLOOR...
...AND REVEAL THE GREATEST NIGHT-MARE OF ALL!
N-NO...! THAT'S MY FACE...!
CLOUD CARS PASS LAZILY OUTSIDE THE WINDOW OF THE SUITE LANDO CALRISSIAN HAS PROVIDED THE FUGITIVE REBELS. FOR SOME TIME HAN SOLO HAS BEEN CONTENT TO IDLY WATCH THEM. UNTIL NOW, WHEN THE DOOR TO LEIA'S ROOM OPENS BEHIND HIM...
HAN, HAS THREEPIO TURNED UP YET...?
HUH...? OH YEAH... HE'S BEEN GONE TOO LONG TO BE JUST LOST.
BUT BEFORE WE ORGANIZE THE SEARCH PARTIES... LET ME GET A LOOK AT YOU! YOU LOOK GREAT!

DO YOU HAVE TO STARE LIKE THAT... IT'S EMBARRASSING.
I... I WONDER IF LUKE MADE IT TO THE FLEET ALL RIGHT.
THE KID...? I'M SURE HE'S FINE, PROBABLY WONDERING WHAT WE'RE DOING RIGHT NOW--
AND WHAT I THINK WE SHOULD BE DOING RIGHT NOW--
--IS THIS.
BUT THE HYDRAULIC WHISPER OF THE CORRIDOR DOOR SUDDENLY INTRUDES..
RAWRRK!
THREEPIO... WHAT'S HAPPENED TO HIM?
CHEWIE SAYS HE FOUND THE PARTS IN A JUNK PILE... ABOUT TO BE RECYCLED!
WHAT A MESS! IF YOU'RE NOT SURE YOU CAN REPAIR HIM, CHEWIE... LET'S TURN HIM OVER TO LANDO TO FIX.
NO, THANKS. SOMETHING'S WRONG HERE. YOUR FRIEND'S VERY CHARMING... BUT I DON'T TRUST HIM.
WELL, I DO TRUST HIM, SWEETHEART, AND I'M NOT GOING TO HAVE YOU ACCUSING MY OLD PAL OF--
AM I INTERRUPTING ANYTHING...? I WAS ABOUT TO INVITE EVERYONE TO JOIN ME FOR A LITTLE REFRESHMENT.

AWAY ON DAGOBAH, LUKE SKYWALKER MEDITATES. SHAKEN BY HIS STRANGE VISION IN THE DARK TREE CAVERN, HE HAS APPLIED HIMSELF TO HIS TRAINING WITH MORE INTENSITY THAN EVER...
YODA... FOR A MOMENT I THOUGHT I SAW BEN...! BUT THEN IT FADED.
FREE YOUR MIND AND RETURN HE WILL. BUT CONTROL, CONTROL! MANY IMAGES WILL FILL YOUR MIND. YOU MUST LEARN OF WHAT YOU SEE.
I... I SEE... A CITY IN THE CLOUDS... BESPIN! MY FRIENDS ARE THERE... B-BUT... THEY'RE IN PAIN... SUFFERING...!
IT IS THE FUTURE YOU SEE.
WILL THEY DIE? I CAN'T LET THAT HAPPEN... I'VE GOT TO GO TO THEM... THEY'RE MY FRIENDS!
AND THEREFORE DECIDE YOU MUST HOW BEST TO SERVE THEM! IF YOU LEAVE NOW, HELP THEM YOU COULD--
--BUT YOU WOULD DESTROY ALL FOR WHICH THEY HAVE FOUGHT AND SUFFERED!
BUT AS A CHILL PASSES THROUGH THE APPRENTICE JEDI, THE OBJECTS OF HIS CONCERN STROLL IN PLEASANT SUNLIGHT ON A CLOUD CITY WALKWAY...
IT'S A LOVELY OUTPOST, LANDO.
WE'RE PROUD OF IT. THE AIR IS QUITE SPECIAL HERE... STIMULATING. YOU COULD GROW TO LIKE IT.
ONLY UNTIL THE FALCON'S REPAIRED, OLD BUDDY. THIS IS A FREE STATION, NOT EVEN PART OF THE MINING GUILD--

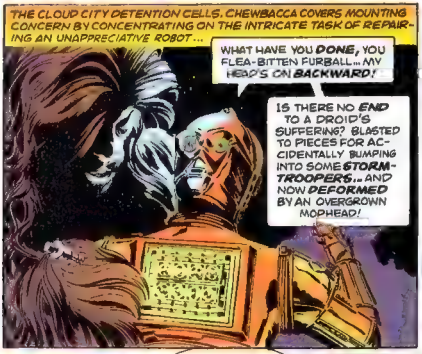
--AREN'T YOU AFRAID THE EMPIRE WILL SOMEDAY LEARN OF YOUR UNOFFICIAL LITTLE OPERATION AND SHUT YOU DOWN?
THAT'S ALWAYS BEEN A DANGER... LOOMING OVER EVERYTHING WE'VE BUILT HERE LIKE A SHADOW.
BUT CIRCUMSTANCES HAVE DEVELOPED WHICH WILL ENSURE SECURITY. YOU SEE, I'VE JUST MADE A DEAL--
--IT'LL KEEP THE EMPIRE OUT OF HERE FOREVER.
CHEWBACCA TRIES TO SNARL A WARNING AS SOMETHING STRIKES HIS SENSES. BUT THE DOORS TO THE DINING HALL ARE ALREADY SWINGING OPEN, AND BEHIND THEM...
SORRY, FRIEND... I HAD NO CHOICE. THEY ARRIVED RIGHT BEFORE YOU DID.
YEAH, LANDO--
...I'M SORRY, TOO!
THE DRAW... THE SHOT... ARE FANTASTICALLY SWIFT PERHAPS THE BEST HAN HAS EVER MADE IN A LONG CAREER OF BEING GOOD WITH A BLASTER...
AGAINST ANY OTHER OPPONENT, THEY WOULD HAVE BEEN DEVASTATING. ANY BUT DARTH VADER, LORD OF THE SITH!
THE BOLTS ARE DEFLECTED AWAY TO EXPLODE HARMLESSLY AGAINST THE WALLS...


... AND HAN'S WEAPON FLIES ACROSS THE ROOM TO HIS FOE!
BOBA FETT AND I WOULD BE HONORED IF YOU WOULD JOIN US.
SOMEWHERE BEHIND THE TRIO OF REBELS COMES THE FAMILIAR CLATTER OF STORMTROOPERS' BOOTS...
ON DAGOBAH, IT IS NIGHT... AND LUKE SKYWALKER BOLTS FROM TROUBLED SLEEP!
MASTER...! IT'S COME AGAIN...! THE VISION OF MY FRIENDS...!
I CAN'T IGNORE IT, YODA... IF I DON'T HELP, THEY'RE GOING TO DIE! I FEEL IT!
I'VE GOT TO GO!
AND AS MORNING APPROACHES, LUKE MOVES TOWARD HIS X-WING FIGHTER, WHICH WAITS IN READINESS. ALSO WAITING... A SHIMMERING VISION OF BEN KENOBI.
YOU'RE NOT READY YET, LUKE. YOU FEEL THE FORCE BUT CANNOT CONTROL IT... YOU ARE NOW MOST SUSCEPTIBLE TO THE TEMPTATIONS OF THE DARK SIDE.
YES, YES! TO OBI-WAN LISTEN. THE TREE! REMEMBER YOUR FAILURE AT THE TREE, HEH?
I'VE LEARNED MUCH SINCE THEN. AND I PROMISE... I'LL RETURN TO FINISH.

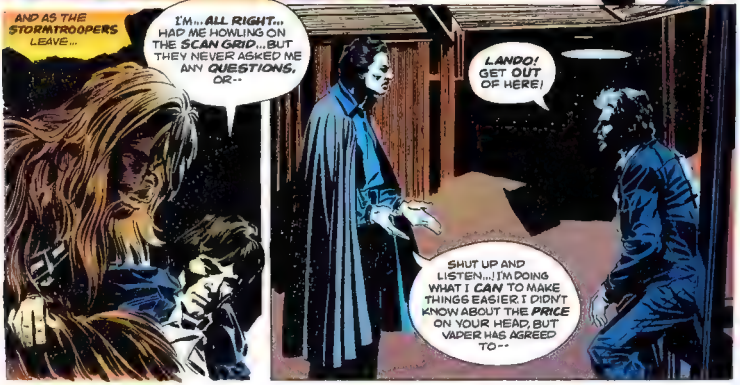
ONLY A FULLY TRAINED JEDI KNIGHT WILL CONQUER VADER AND HIS EMPEROR! CHOOSE THE QUICK AND EASY PATH AND YOU'LL BECOME AN AGENT OF EVIL, PLUNGING THE GALAXY INTO THE ABYSS OF HATE AND DESPAIR.
YOU ARE THE LAST JEDI, LUKE. BE PATIENT.
AND SACRIFICE HAN AND LEIA..? I CAN'T, BEN... I CAN'T!
TURMOIL RAGING WITHIN HIM, THE YOUNG HERO OF THE DEATH STAR BATTLE CLIMBS INTO THE X-WING COCKPIT... AND READIES FOR TAKE OFF.
LUKE, I CANNOT PROTECT YOU. IF YOU CHOOSE TO FACE VADER... YOU DO IT ALONE. USE THE FORCE FOR DEFENSE... DON'T GIVE IN TO HATE, ANGER, FEAR. THEY LEAD THE WAY TO THE DARK SIDE.
I-I'LL REMEMBER, BEN. AND... I GIVE YOU MY WORD I'LL BE BACK!
THEN, WITH A ROAR OF ROCKET ENGINES... THE FIGHTER CRAFT SOARS UP INTO THE MISTS.
HE'S STILL RECKLESS, YODA... THINGS ARE GOING TO GET WORSE I FEAR. BUT THE BOY IS OUR LAST HOPE.
NO, OBI-WAN... THERE IS ANOTHER.
IN THE CLOUD CITY ABOVE BESPIN... SCREAMS ARE HEARD. THEY COME FROM HAN SOLO.
DARTH VADER LISTENS FOR A WHILE WITHOUT GREAT INTEREST, THEN TURNS...
...TO JOIN BOBA FETT AND LANDO CALRISSIAN.
I'M CONCERNED THAT THE CAPTAIN NOT BE DAMAGED, LORD VADER. JABBA THE HUTT PAYS DOUBLE IF HE'S ALIVE.
HIS PAIN IS GREAT, BOUNTY HUNTER... WITHOUT BEING PERMANENT. BUT YOU DON'T GET HIM... UNTIL I HAVE SKYWALKER.
WHAT ABOUT LEIA AND THE WOOKIEE...?

YOUR MEN SAID SOMETHING ABOUT THEM NEVER LEAVING THIS CITY. KEEPING THEM PRISONER HERE WASN'T A CONDITION OF OUR AGREEMENT... NOR WAS GIVING HAN TO THIS BOUNTY HUNTER!
I HOPE YOU DON'T THINK YOU'RE BEING TREATED UNFAIRLY, CALRISSIAN--
--IT WOULD BE MOST UNFORTUNATE IF I HAD TO LEAVE A PERMANENT GARRISON AT YOUR OUTPOST.

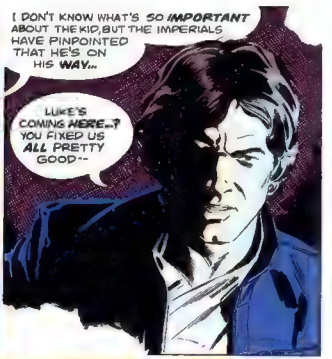
LANDO IS TOO MUCH OF A SURVIVOR TO DO ANYTHING BUT KEEP SILENT, UNTIL THE DARK LORD AND BOBA FETT DEPART.
YOU KNOW, LOBOT, THIS DEAL'S GETTING WORSE ALL THE TIME.
I'VE GOT A BAD FEELING ABOUT THIS!


THE CLOUD CITY DETENTION CELLS. CHEWBACCA COVERS MOUNTING CONCERN BY CONCENTRATING ON THE INTRICATE TASK OF REPAIRING AN UNAPPRECIATIVE ROBOT...
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE, YOU FLEA-BITTEN FURBALL... MY HEAD'S ON BACKWARD!
IS THERE NO END TO A DROID'S SUFFERING? BLASTED TO PIECES FOR ACCIDENTALLY BUMPING INTO SOME STORMTROOPERS... AND NOW DEFORMED BY AN OVERGROWN MOPHEAD!

THEN... THE DOOR HISSES OPEN! AND CHEWIE AND HIS FELLOW PRISONER, LEIA ORGANA, SEE...
WAAAARRK!
HAN!


AND AS THE STORMTROOPERS LEAVE...
I'M... ALL RIGHT... HAD ME HOWLING ON THE SCAN GRID... BUT THEY NEVER ASKED ME ANY QUESTIONS, OR--
LANDO! GET OUT OF HERE!
SHUT UP AND LISTEN...! I'M DOING WHAT I CAN TO MAKE THINGS EASIER. I DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT THE PRICE ON YOUR HEAD, BUT VADER HAS AGREED TO--

YOU DON'T KNOW MUCH IF YOU THINK DARTH VADER WANTS ALL OF US ANYTHING BUT DEAD BEFORE THIS THING IS OVER!
HE DOESN'T WANT YOU AT ALL, HAN! HE'S SETTING A TRAP FOR SOME YOUNG REBEL NAMED SKYWALKER... YOU PEOPLE ARE THE BAIT.


I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S SO IMPORTANT ABOUT THE KID, BUT THE IMPERIALS HAVE PINPOINTED THAT HE'S ON HIS WAY...
LUKE'S COMING HERE...? YOU FIXED US ALL PRETTY GOOD--

--FRIEND!

FOR A MOMENT IT'S A FIGHT... UNTIL LANDO'S GUARDS MOVE IN, CLUBBING WITH THEIR BLASTERS!
OKAY... ENOUGH! I'VE DONE AS MUCH AS I CAN. I WISH IT WERE MORE... BUT I'VE GOT MY OWN PROBLEMS.
I'VE ALREADY STUCK MY NECK OUT FARTHER THAN I SHOULD.
YEAH, YEAH, LANDO ... YOU'RE A REAL HERO!

WHIRLING, THE CLOUD CITY ADMINISTRATOR STALKS OUT...
YOU CERTAINLY HAVE A WAY WITH PEOPLE...!

LEAVING THE DETENTION AREA, LANDO FINDS HE'S WANTED, WANTED BY THE LAST PERSON HE CARES TO SEE... AND THE ONLY ONE HE DARES NOT REFUSE.
LORD VADER, THE X-WING CLASS SHIP YOU'VE HAD US MONITOR IS NOW APPROACHING.
GOOD. ALLOW SKYWALKER TO LAND, WE'LL BE READY FOR HIM SHORTLY.
THIS FACILITY IS CRUDE, CALRISSIAN... BUT IT SHOULD MEET MY NEEDS.
BRING IN SOLO.
WE ONLY USE THIS PLACE FOR CARBON FREEZING. IF YOU PUT HIM THROUGH THAT... IT MIGHT KILL HIM.
I DON'T WISH THE EMPEROR'S PRIZE TO BE DAMAGED... WE'LL TEST IT FIRST.

OUTSIDE, THE REBEL FIGHTER CRAFT OF LUKE SKYWALKER EASES THROUGH BESPIN'S ATMOSPHERE, GLIDING SMOOTHLY INTO A LANDING DESCENT FOR THE CITY IN THE CLOUDS...
BRR-KLIK DIT DIT-- WHBLEEEP!
YOU HAVEN'T PICKED UP ANY PATROL SHIPS...? YES, ARTOO... I FIND THAT SUSPICIOUS, ALSO.
BUT WE'VE COME TOO FAR TO TURN BACK NOW!

RESPONDING INSTANTLY TO THEIR LEADER'S COMMAND.. STORMTROOPERS BRING HAN. TOO SOON THE TEST OF THE CARBON-FREEZING CHAMBER IS READY TO BEGIN... BEFORE AN AUDIENCE OF THE WILLING AND THE UNWILLING.
THE EMPIRE WILL COMPENSATE YOU FOR THE LOSS.
PUT HIM IN THE CHAMBER!
NO!
WHAT IF SOLO DOESN'T SURVIVE, LORD VADER? BEYOND WHAT YOU'RE PAYING... HE'S WORTH A LOT TO ME.

LEIA'S CRY TRIGGERS THE GIANT WOOKIEE INTO ACTION. TROOPERS POUR FORWARD FOR THE KILL... UNTIL HAN INTERCEDES.

SWIFTLY, THE CAPTAIN OF THE MILLENNIUM FALCON IS STRAPPED TO THE CHAMBER'S HYDRAULIC LIFT PLATFORM. HE HAS TIME FOR A BRIEF GLANCE AT HIS FRIENDS. THEN, TO THEIR HORROR, THE PLATFORM DROPS...
...AND FIERY LIQUID CASCADES DOWN INTO THE OPENING FROM THE JETS ABOVE!
THEY'RE ENCASING HIM IN CARBONITE... IT'S A HIGH-QUALITY ALLOY, MUCH BETTER THAN MY OWN. HE SHOULD BE QUITE WELL PROTECTED... IF HE SURVIVED THE FREEZING PROCESS.
AND NO ONE AT THE SCENE KNOWS BETTER WHAT A BIG "IF" THAT IS THAN LANDO CALRISSIAN...
...WHO WINCES IN SORROW AT HOW FAR THE PRICE OF SUCCESS HAS TAKEN HIM.
ELSEWHERE, A DOOR FROM THE LANDING AREA SLIDES BACK. FOR A MOMENT, LUKE SKYWALKER HESITATES, LETTING HIS FEELINGS REACH OUT TO THE SILENT, OMINOUSLY DESERTED CORRIDORS BEYOND..
...THEN, HE MOVES GRIMLY AND URGENTLY FORWARD INTO CLOUD CITY...AND WHATEVER LIES AHEAD.

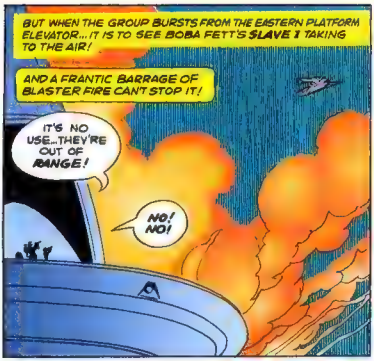
OMINOUS SILENCE HANGS OVER THE CARBON-FREEZING CHAMBER OF BESPIN'S CLOUD CITY. THE PROCESS IS COMPLETE...THE RESULTS NOW STAND FOR ALL PRESENT TO VIEW, AS ADMINISTRATOR LANDO CALRISSIAN TENSELY CHECKS READ-OUT GAUGES AND TRIES TO DETERMINE IF THE OLD FRIEND HE BETRAYED TO SAVE HIS OUTPOST CITY IS DEAD OR...
HE'S ALIVE...! AND IN PERFECT HIBERNATION!
THEN SOLO IS ALL YOURS, BOUNTY HUNTER... TAKE HIM TO JABBA THE HUTT IF THAT'S WHAT YOU WISH.
AND NOW THAT WE'RE CERTAIN IT FREEZERIES WITHOUT KILLING...RESET THE CHAMBER FOR SKYWALKER!

MONITORS REPORT THAT HE'S JUST LANDED, MY LORD.
GOOD. SEE THAT HE FINDS HIS WAY HERE.
AND MAKE ARRANGEMENTS FOR A PERMANENT GARRISON TO TAKE UP RESIDENCE--
--SO THE PRINCESS AND SOLO'S WOOKIEE COMPANION CAN STILL BE WATCHED OVER WHILE IN CALRISSIAN'S CARE,
THAT WASN'T OUR BARGAIN! YOU SAID THE EMPIRE WOULDN'T INTERFERE IN--
I'M ALTERING THE BARGAIN, PRAY I DON'T ALTER IT ANY FURTHER.
AND LANDO FEELS A SUDDEN CONSTRICTION IN HIS THROAT, PAINFUL...BUT BRIEF. MERELY A REMINDER... FOR NOW.
MEANWHILE, THROUGH EERILY DESERTED CORRIDORS, LUKE SKYWALKER ADVANCES CAUTIOUSLY TOWARD THE TIBANNA GAS MINING COMMUNITY'S CENTER. THEN...
QUIET, ARTOO. THERE'S SOME KIND OF JUNCTION AHEAD--
SOMEONE'S COMING!
HAN! T-THAT'S HAN THEY'RE CARRYING...!
WHAT HAVE THEY DONE TO HIM...?!
BOBA FETT AND THE STORMTROOPER ESCORTS OF THE CARBONITE-ENTOMBED CORELLIAN WHIRL TO FIRE...

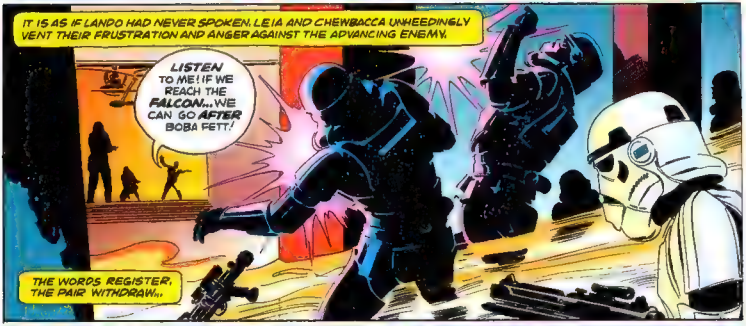
...ONLY TO FIND THAT THE APPRENTICE JEDI IS TOO SWIFT!
HIS SHOT HITS TWO TROOPERS
BUT LUKE'S ATTEMPT TO GIVE CHASE IS CUT SHORT BY A HEAVY BARRAGE FROM BOBA FETT...
...AND THE SUDDEN DESCENT OF A BLAST SHIELD DOOR!
HE SPINS, LOOKING FOR ANOTHER WAY TO FOLLOW, AND SEES INSTEAD...
LEIA! CHEWBACCA! THREEPIO!
LUKE!
GET OUT OF HERE!
GET OUT OF CLOUD CITY...
IT'S A TRAP!
AGAIN A BLAST SHIELD THUNDERS DOWN, CUTTING LUKE OFF FROM THOSE HE HOPES TO SAVE...

CORRIDOR BY CORRIDOR, IT CONTINUES... SEPARATING HIM EVEN FROM ARTOO-DETOO! UNTIL AT LAST THERE IS ONLY ONE PATH, LEADING TO THE CARBON-FREEZING CHAMBER...
...AND WHAT LUKE NOW REALIZES WAS INEVITABLE.
DARTH VADER... I FEEL YOUR PRESENCE.
SHOW YOURSELF... OR DO YOU FEAR ME?
THE FORCE IS WITH YOU, YOUNG SKYWALKER... BUT YOU'RE NOT A JEDI YET!
INSTANTLY, TWO LIGHTSABERS IGNITE...
AND WITH A GREAT LEAP FROM LUKE, BORN OF HIS INTENSE TRAINING WITH YODA...
...A BATTLE, LONG COMING, IS JOINED!
MEANTIME, AS THE IMPERIALS HUSTLE LEIA AND CHEWBACCA, WITH HIS BURDEN OF THE BLASTER-DAMAGED SEE-THREEPIO, THROUGH THE MINING OUTPOST'S INTERSECTING BYWAYS, LANDO SUDDENLY SPEAKS...
CODE FORCE... SEVEN.
ALMOST INSTANTLY, CLOUD CITY GUARDS SURROUND THEM ALL.
WHAT'S HAPPENED, CHEWBACCA? TURN ME AROUND SO I CAN SEE, YOU OVERSTUFFED HAIRBALL!

AND WHAT THE TRANSLATOR DROID'S PHOTORECEPTORS SOON BEHOLD IS THE STORMTROOPERS BEING DISARMED...
PUT THIS BUNCH IN THE SECURITY TOWER... QUIETLY. NO ONE MUST KNOW.
WHAT'S GOING ON...?
LET'S SAY I'M TRYING TO CORRECT A BIG MISTAKE. COME ON... WE'RE GETTING OUT OF HERE.
LANDO, AFTER WHAT YOU DID TO HAN, I WOULDN'T TRUST YOU TO --
LEIA DOESN'T FINISH, BECAUSE SUDDENLY...
...CHEWBACCA IS EXPRESSING THE SAME FEELINGS MORE STRONGLY!
NRAWWWK!
I-I... HAD NO CHOICE...! BUT... THERE'S STILL A CHANCE TO... SAVE HAN!... BOBA FETT'S SHIP... IS AT... EAST PLATFORM...!
CHEWIE! LET HIM GO!
BUT KEEP YOUR EYES ON HIM EVERY STEP OF THE WAY!
I'VE A FEELING I'M MAKING ANOTHER BIG MISTAKE...
NONETHELESS, LANDO CALRISSIAN IS SOON ON HIS FEET...
...LEADING A DESPERATE RACE TOWARD CLOUD CITY'S LANDING AREA, AND THAT RACE LEADS THEM PAST...
ARTOO! THIS WAY... HURRY!
VREETA BLIIT WA-DOOOT!
I KNOW... I KNOW, BUT MASTER LUKE CAN TAKE CARE OF HIMSELF... AT LEAST UNTIL WE CAN RESCUE CAPTAIN SOLO FROM THE BOUNTY HUNTER!


BUT WHEN THE GROUP BURSTS FROM THE EASTERN PLATFORM ELEVATOR... IT IS TO SEE BOBA FETT'S SLAVE I TAKING TO THE AIR!
AND A FRANTIC BARRAGE OF BLASTER FIRE CAN'T STOP IT!
IT'S NO USE...THEY'RE OUT OF RANGE!
NO! NO!

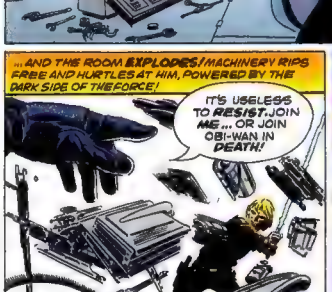
AND THE EMPIRE ALLOWS NO TIME TO MOURN THE LOSS OF HAN SOLO...
COME ON...! LET'S MOVE!

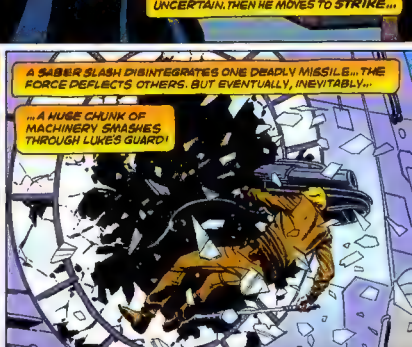

IT IS AS IF LANDO HAD NEVER SPOKEN. LEIA AND CHEWBACCA UNHEEDINGLY VENT THEIR FRUSTRATION AND ANGER AGAINST THE ADVANCING ENEMY.
LISTEN TO ME! IF WE REACH THE FALCON...WE CAN GO AFTER BOBA FETT!
THE WORDS REGISTER, THE PAIR WITHDRAW...

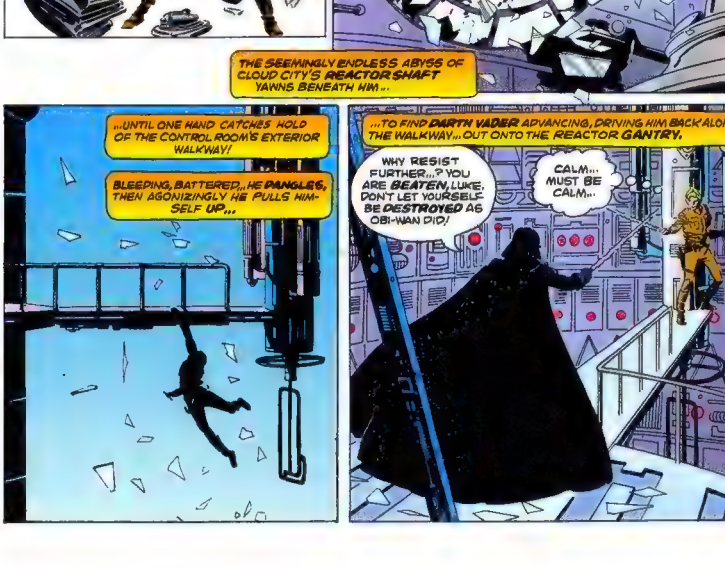
WHILE IN THE CARBON-FREEZING CHAMBER...LUKE SKYWALKER RELENTLESSLY ADVANCES!
THE FEAR DOES NOT REACH YOU... YOU'VE LEARNED MORE THAN I ANTICIPATED.
YOU'LL FIND I'M FULL OF SURPRISES!

AND I, TOO!
A LIGHTNING FEINT AND SLASH MAKE LUKE DODGE BACKWARD...ONTO THE UNCERTAIN FOOTING OF THE PLATFORM STAIRS!

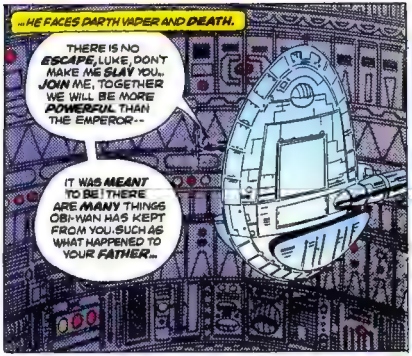
...CAUTIONING HIM NOT TO GIVE IN TO THE DARKER EMOTIONS. STILL, HE PRESSES ON... INTO ONE OF THE MINING OUTPOST'S REACTOR CONTROL ROOMS.
YOU'VE FOUND ME... NOW ATTACK, DESTROY ME! ONLY BY TAKING YOUR REVENGE CAN YOU SAVE YOURSELF!
FOR A MOMENT, LUKE IS CONFUSED, UNCERTAIN. THEN HE MOVES TO STRIKE...

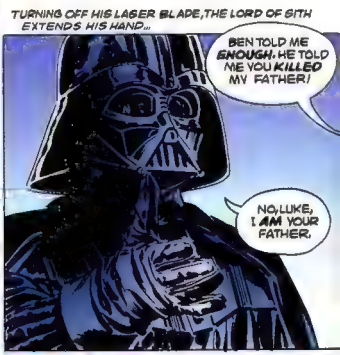

...AND THE ROOM EXPLODES! MACHINERY RIPS FREE AND HURTLES AT HIM, POWERED BY THE DARK SIDE OF THE FORCE!
IT'S USELESS TO RESIST. JOIN ME... OR JOIN OBI-WAN IN DEATH!


A SABER SLASH DISINTEGRATES ONE DEADLY MISSILE... THE FORCE DEFLECTS OTHERS. BUT EVENTUALLY, INEVITABLY...
...A HUGE CHUNK OF MACHINERY SMASHES THROUGH LUKE'S GUARD!

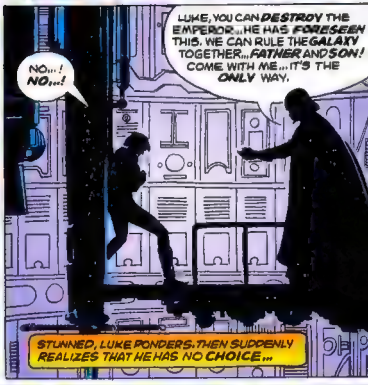

THE SEEMINGLY ENDLESS ABYSS OF CLOUD CITY'S REACTOR SHAFT YAWNS BENEATH HIM...
...UNTIL ONE HAND CATCHES HOLD OF THE CONTROL ROOM'S EXTERIOR WALKWAY!
BLEEDING, BATTERED... HE DANGLES, THEN AGONIZINGLY HE PULLS HIMSELF UP...
...TO FIND DARTH VADER ADVANCING, DRIVING HIM BACK ALONG THE WALKWAY... OUT ONTO THE REACTOR GANTRY.
WHY RESIST FURTHER...? YOU ARE BEATEN, LUKE. DON'T LET YOURSELF BE DESTROYED AS OBI-WAN DID!
CALM... MUST BE CALM...

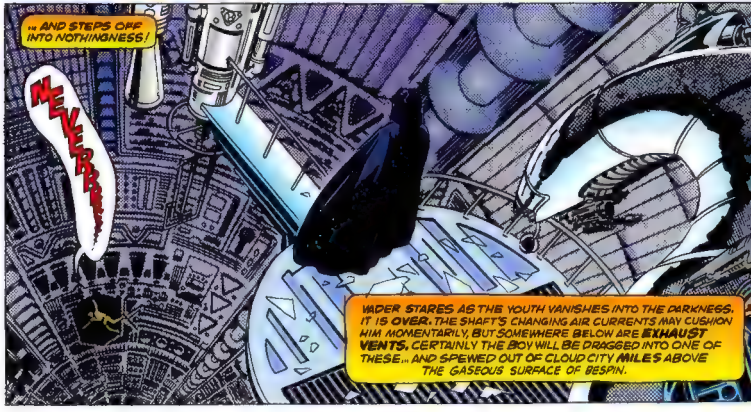
IN THE LANDING AREA, A DOOR NOW SEPARATES LEIA, LANDO, AND THE OTHERS FROM THE MILLENNIUM FALCON. A DOOR THAT IS SEALED...AS STORMTROOPERS CLOSE IN!
ARTOO! PLUG INTO THE CONTROL PANEL... YOU CAN OVERRIDE THE ALERT SYSTEM!
FRA-DWEEEEEEGET!
WELL, NEXT TIME YOU PAY MORE ATTENTION! I'M NOT SUPPOSED TO KNOW POWER SOCKETS FROM COMPUTER FEEDS... I'M AN INTERPRETER!
ANYONE ELSE GOT ANY IDEAS?
THIS WAY! THERE MAY BE ANOTHER APPROACH TO THE FALCON. LEAST I GOT A CHANCE TO USE THE COMLINK BACK THERE--
--AND ALERTED EVERYONE ELSE TO EVACUATE BEFORE MORE IMPERIALS ARRIVE!
BACK AT THE REACTOR CORE, ABOVE THE SHAFT'S HOWLING WINDS, THE STEADY CLASH OF SABERS CAN BE HEARD... UNTIL THE DARK LORD'S BLADE COMES SLICING THROUGH PART OF THE GANTRY EQUIPMENT TO STRIKE LUKE'S SWORDARM!
PAIN SEIZES THE YOUNG WARRIOR! HIS WEAPON FALLS. THE HAND THAT GRASPED IT WILL NEVER GRASP ANYTHING AGAIN. AND CLINGING PRECARIOUSLY WITH HIS ONE GOOD HAND...

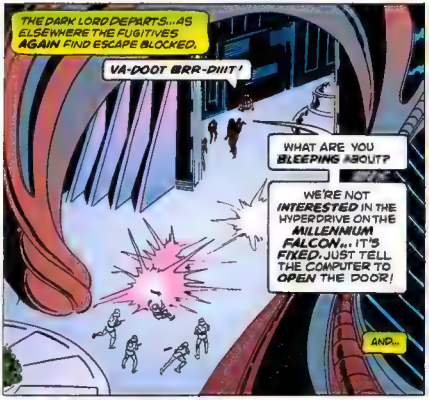

...HE FACES DARTH VADER AND DEATH.
THERE IS NO ESCAPE, LUKE, DON'T MAKE ME SLAY YOU. JOIN ME, TOGETHER WE WILL BE MORE POWERFUL THAN THE EMPEROR--
IT WAS MEANT TO BE! THERE ARE MANY THINGS OBI-WAN HAS KEPT FROM YOU. SUCH AS WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR FATHER...


TURNING OFF HIS LASER BLADE, THE LORD OF SITH EXTENDS HIS HAND...
BEN TOLD ME ENOUGH. HE TOLD ME YOU KILLED MY FATHER!
NO, LUKE, I AM YOUR FATHER.

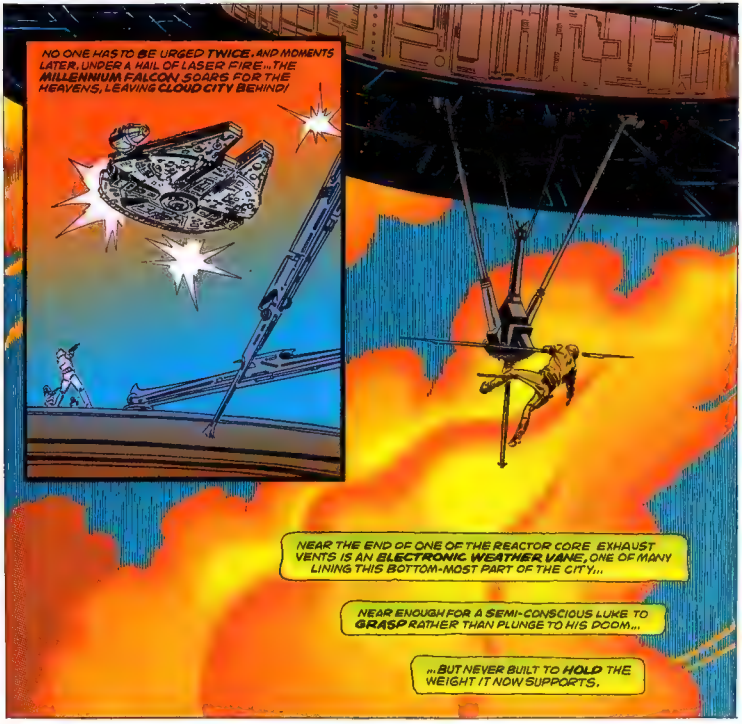
N-NO... THAT... CAN'T BE!-IT'S... IMPOSSIBLE!
SEARCH YOUR FEELINGS, YOUNGSTER. YOU KNOW IT TO BE TRUE.


LUKE, YOU CAN DESTROY THE EMPEROR... HE HAS FORESEEN THIS. WE CAN RULE THE GALAXY TOGETHER... FATHER AND SON! COME WITH ME... IT'S THE ONLY WAY.
NO...! NO...!
STUNNED, LUKE PONDERS. THEN SUDDENLY REALIZES THAT HE HAS NO CHOICE...

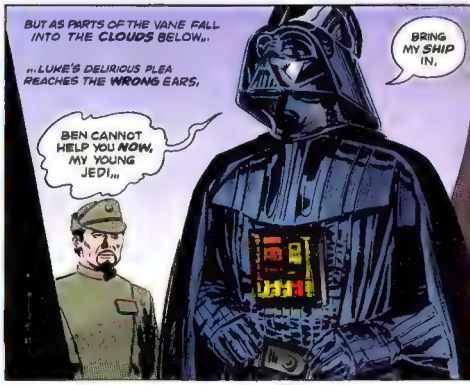

...AND STEPS OFF INTO NOTHINGNESS!
NEVERRRRR!!!
VADER STARES AS THE YOUTH VANISHES INTO THE DARKNESS. IT IS OVER. THE SHAFT'S CHANGING AIR CURRENTS MAY CUSHION HIM MOMENTARILY, BUT SOMEWHERE BELOW ARE EXHAUST VENTS. CERTAINLY THE BOY WILL BE DRAGGED INTO ONE OF THESE... AND SPEWED OUT OF CLOUD CITY MILES ABOVE THE GASEOUS SURFACE OF BESPIN.


THE DARK LORD DEPARTS...AS ELSEWHERE THE FUGITIVES AGAIN FIND ESCAPE BLOCKED.
VA-DOOT BRR-DIIIT!
WHAT ARE YOU BLEEPING ABOUT?
WE'RE NOT INTERESTED IN THE HYPERDRIVE ON THE MILLENNIUM FALCON... IT'S FIXED. JUST TELL THE COMPUTER TO OPEN THE DOOR!
AND...

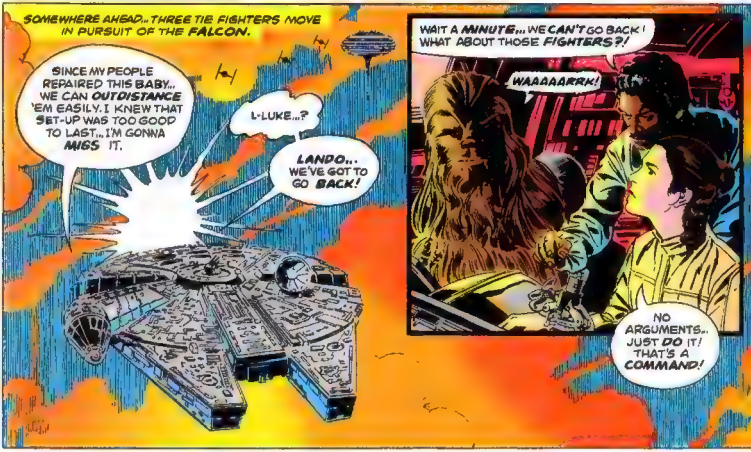
ARTOO, YOU DID IT! I NEVER DOUBTED YOU FOR A SECOND!
HURRY! OR WE'LL NEVER MAKE IT!


NO ONE HAS TO BE URGED TWICE. AND MOMENTS LATER, UNDER A HAIL OF LASER FIRE...THE MILLENNIUM FALCON SOARS FOR THE HEAVENS, LEAVING CLOUD CITY BEHIND!
NEAR THE END OF ONE OF THE REACTOR CORE EXHAUST VENTS IS AN ELECTRONIC WEATHER VANE, ONE OF MANY LINING THIS BOTTOM-MOST PART OF THE CITY...
NEAR ENOUGH FOR A SEMI-CONSCIOUS LUKE TO GRASP RATHER THAN PLUNGE TO HIS DOOM...
...BUT NEVER BUILT TO HOLD THE WEIGHT IT NOW SUPPORTS.

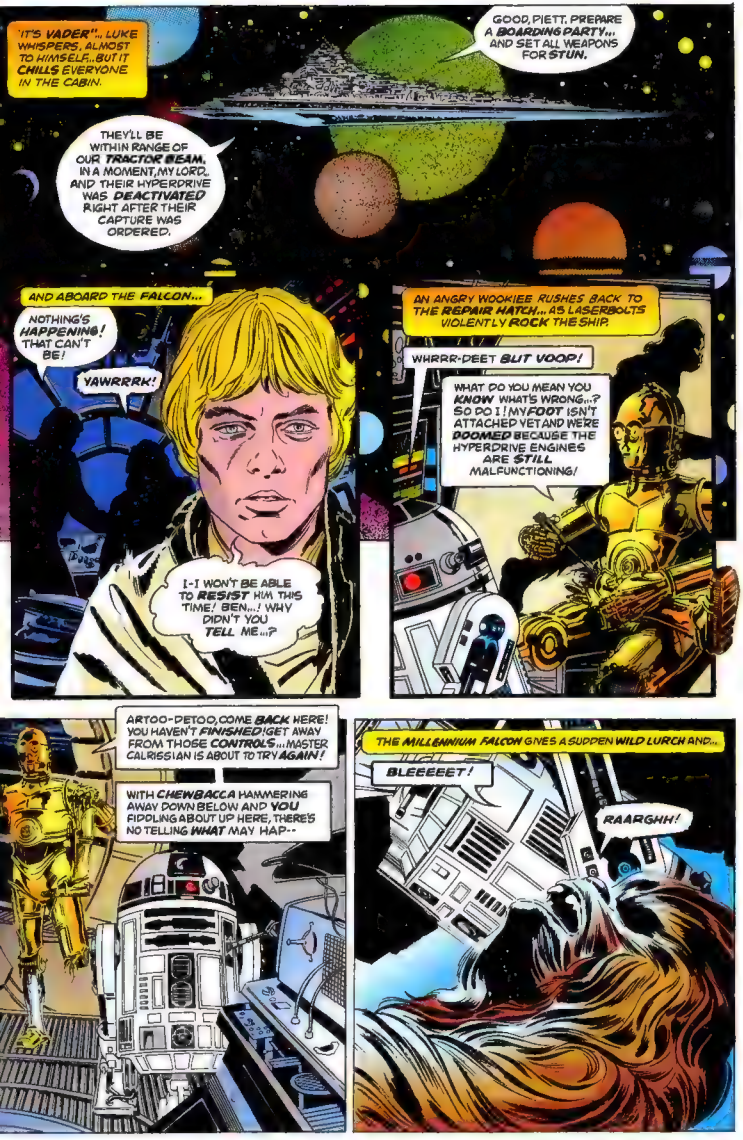
ALREADY IT CREAKS WITH STRAIN AND STARTS TO GIVE...
BEN... BEN...


BUT AS PARTS OF THE VANE FALL INTO THE CLOUDS BELOW...
...LUKE'S DELIRIOUS PLEA REACHES THE WRONG EARS.
BRING MY SHIP IN.
BEN CANNOT HELP YOU NOW, MY YOUNG JEDI...

LEIA...
...HEAR ME... LEIA...


SOMEWHERE AHEAD... THREE TIE FIGHTERS MOVE IN PURSUIT OF THE FALCON.
SINCE MY PEOPLE REPAIRED THIS BABY.. WE CAN OUTDISTANCE 'EM EASILY. I KNEW THAT SET-UP WAS TOO GOOD TO LAST... I'M GONNA MISS IT.
L-LUKE...?
LANDO... WE'VE GOT TO GO BACK!
WAIT A MINUTE... WE CAN'T GO BACK! WHAT ABOUT THOSE FIGHTERS?!
WAAAAARRK!
NO ARGUMENTS.. JUST DO IT! THAT'S A COMMAND!

BENEATH THE AERIAL CITY... THE WEATHER VANE'S LAST SUPPORT SNAPS! SILENT, BARELY CONCIOUS, BEYOND HOPE...
...LUKE SKYWALKER FALLS!
...A FALL BROKEN BY A SAUCER-SHAPED SMUGGLING SHIP THAT ZOOMS IN FROM OUT OF THE DISTANCE!
WAS LANDO READY AT THE TOP HATCH? DID WE CATCH LUKE ALL RIGHT? HOW FAR DID HE FALL?!
THE ANSWERS TO LEIA'S CONCERNED QUESTIONS ARE DELAYED... BY A PERSISTENT TRIO OF TIE FIGHTERS!
GET US OUT OF HERE, LADY--
...AND I THINK YOUR FRIEND WILL SURVIVE!
THANK THE FORCE! BUT UNDER THIS POUNDING THE DEFLECTOR SHIELDS CAN'T HOLD UP--
WE WON'T HAVE ROOM FOR ANY MISTAKES JUMPING TO HYPERSPACE.
IF MY CREW SAID IT WAS FIXED... IT'S FIXED, PRINCESS.
THAT SOUNDS A LITTLE TOO FAMILIAR, LANDO.. ESPECIALLY SINCE ANOTHER SHIP, MUCH BIGGER, IS NOW TRYING TO CUT US OFF!


'IT'S VADER'... LUKE WHISPERS, ALMOST TO HIMSELF...BUT IT CHILLS EVERYONE IN THE CABIN.
GOOD, PIETT. PREPARE A BOARDING PARTY... AND SET ALL WEAPONS FOR STUN.
THEY'LL BE WITHIN RANGE OF OUR TRACTOR BEAM. IN A MOMENT, MY LORD. AND THEIR HYPERDRIVE WAS DEACTIVATED RIGHT AFTER THEIR CAPTURE WAS ORDERED.
AND ABOARD THE FALCON...
NOTHING'S HAPPENING! THAT CAN'T BE!
YAWRRRK!
I-I WON'T BE ABLE TO RESIST HIM THIS TIME! BEN...! WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME...?
AN ANGRY WOOKIEE RUSHES BACK TO THE REPAIR HATCH... AS LASERBOLTS VIOLENTLY ROCK THE SHIP.
WHRRR-DEET BUT VOOP!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN YOU KNOW WHAT'S WRONG...? SO DO I! MY FOOT ISN'T ATTACHED YET, AND WE'RE DOOMED BECAUSE THE HYPERDRIVE ENGINES ARE STILL MALFUNCTIONING!
ARTOO-DETOO, COME BACK HERE! YOU HAVEN'T FINISHED! GET AWAY FROM THOSE CONTROLS... MASTER CALRISSIAN IS ABOUT TO TRY AGAIN!
WITH CHEWBACCA HAMMERING AWAY DOWN BELOW AND YOU FIDDLING ABOUT UP HERE, THERE'S NO TELLING WHAT MAY HAP--
THE MILLENNIUM FALCON GIVES A SUDDEN WILD LURCH AND...
BLEEEEET!
RAARGHH!

THAT DID IT!
AND DESPITE AN INCREDIBLE COMMOTION IN THE REPAIR HATCH, HAN SOLO'S FREIGHTER SPEEDS AWAY INTO INFINITY... AND SAFETY AT LAST!
WHILE ON THE BRIDGE OF HIS MASSIVE CRUISER, DARTH VADER TURNS FROM HIS TERRIFIED OFFICERS, WALKING SLOWLY, CONTEMPLATIVELY, AS THOUGH FOCUSING ON ANOTHER TIME, ANOTHER PLACE...
...PERHAPS THE FUTURE.
SOMETIME LATER, IN A SAFE SECTOR OF SPACE... A PATIENT RECUPERATES FROM AN OPERATION THAT HAS GIVEN HIM A NEW HAND... ONE THAT IS MECHANIZED, CYBERNETICALLY CONTROLLED.
MASTER LUKE, IT'S LANDO ON THE COMLINK.
LUKE...? CHEWIE AND I ARE READY FOR TAKE-OFF.
I'LL SEE YOU ON TATOOINE.
AND DON'T WORRY, LEIA... WE'LL FIND HAN!
YAROWRK!
AND AS THE MILLENNIUM FALCON PULLS AWAY FROM THE REBEL BATTLE CRUISER THAT HAS BEEN A TEMPORARY REFUGE... THOSE LEFT BEHIND HAVE MANY THOUGHTS, MANY UNCERTAINTIES, BUT FOR THIS MOMENT...
...THEY ALSO HAVE PEACE.
TAKE CARE, MY FRIENDS... MAY THE FORCE BE WITH YOU!
END

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THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

Production sketches

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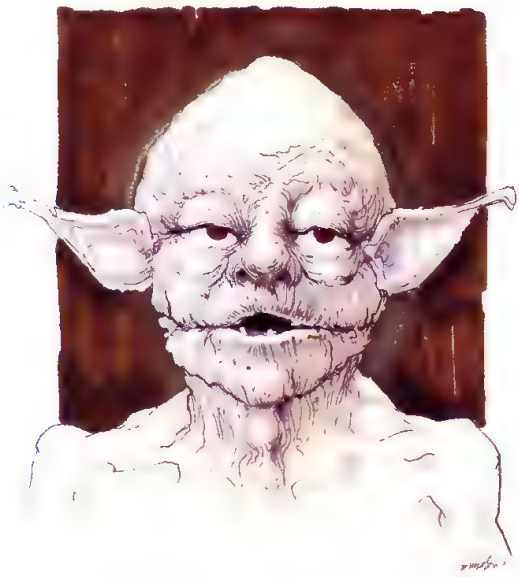

18"
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PAN

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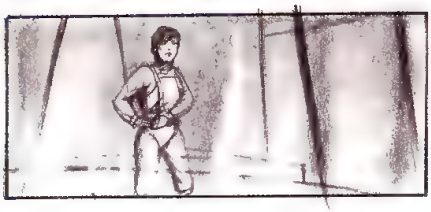
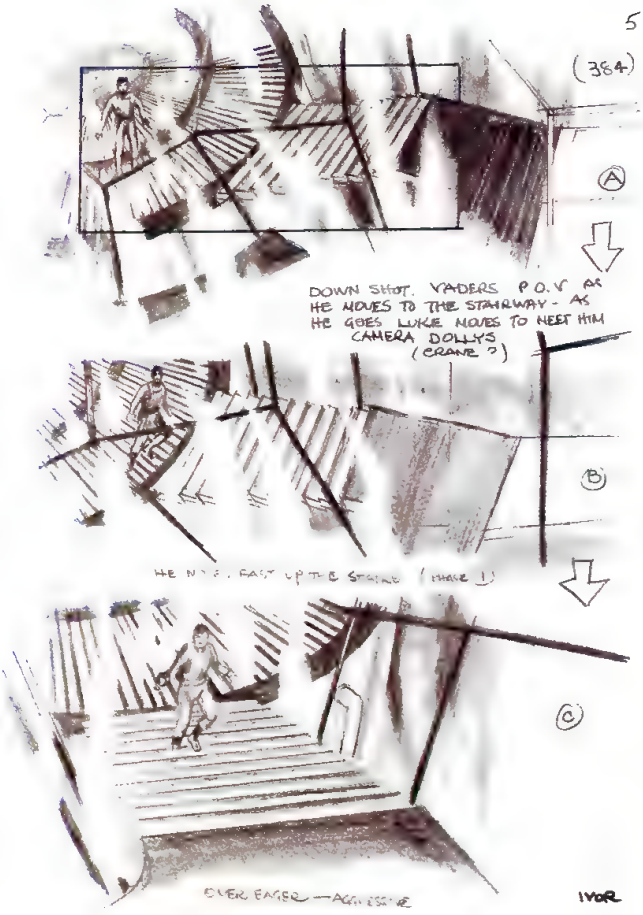


LUKE PUTS HIS SABER AWAY

384 CUT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A
DOWN SHOT. VADERS P.O.V AS HE MOVES TO THE STAIRWAY - AS HE GOES LUKE MOVES TO MEET HIM CAMERA DOLLYS (CRANE ?)
B
C
OVER EAGER — AGGRESSIVE
IVOR

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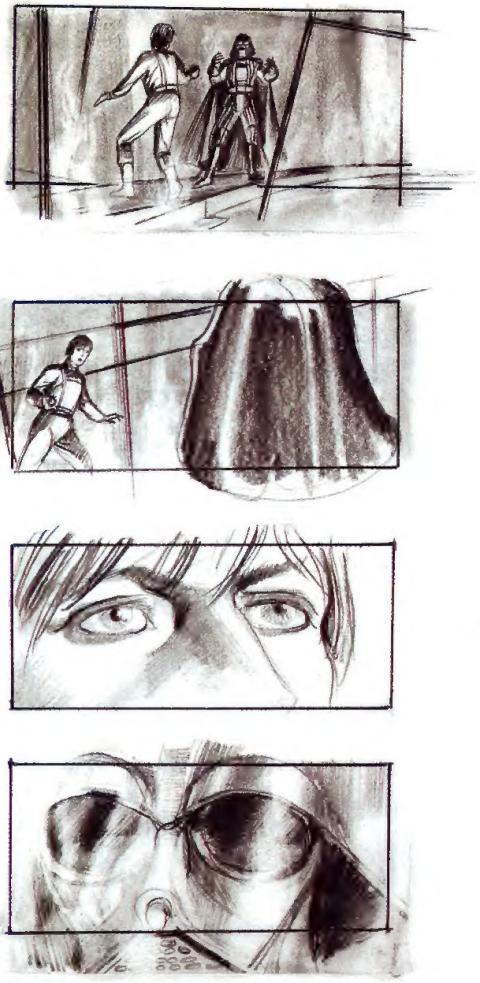
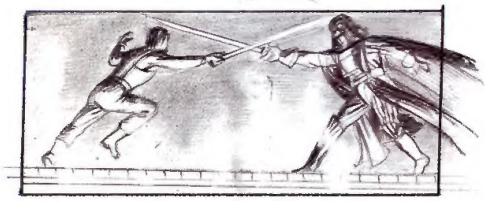


7

LUKE IGMTES

384

VADER
IGMTES



LUKE ATTACKS
AGGRESSIVELY

SEE
PETER DIAMOND

WHEN THE CYCLE IS COMPLETE AND THE CIRCLE IS ENCLOSED, TRUTH AND JUSTICE WILL STAND TRIUMPHANT!

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